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Cross-Ice Play: An Analysis of Organizational Change in Minor Hockey

By

Spencer John Riehl

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Faculty of Human Kinetics  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Human Kinetics  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2017

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Cross-Ice Play: An Analysis of Organizational Change in Minor Hockey

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April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine a potential change to the way minor hockey is played in Ontario. To date, the adoption of cross-ice play has varied throughout the province, making it a fruitful context for studying change prior to implementation. The modified version of the Integrative Model of Organizational Change presented by Legg, Snelgrove, and Wood (2016) served as the theoretical framework for the study. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with stakeholders (i.e., decision makers, board members, coaches) from key provincial and regional hockey organizations in Ontario. The current study aimed to develop a better understanding of the dynamics influencing the acceptance, resistance and sustainability of organizational change in a youth sport context. The findings provided insight about the pressures facing minor hockey associations, the reasons why organizations believe those pressures might lead to a consideration of change, the mechanisms that sustain the status quo despite being faced with pressures, and factors that could enable change. In sum, this research can help stakeholders and organizations understand the challenges of the change process prior to implementation, while contributing to organizational theory and change literature through a focus on the concepts of institutional work as well as an extension of the model presented by Legg et al. (2016).

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABA- Amateur Boxing Association

EMHA- Essex Minor Hockey Association

LTAD- Long-Term Athlete Development Model

NCAA- National Collegiate Athletic Association

NSO- National Sport Organization

OMHA- Ontario Minor Hockey Association

OSA- Ontario Soccer Association

OTP- Own the Podium

REB- University Research Ethics Board

WMHA- Windsor Minor Hockey Association

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### **Introduction**

Variable and shifting environments create a need for organizations to embrace change in order to gain a competitive advantage and sustain viability in continually developing marketplaces (Cunningham, 2002; Welty Peachey, Bruening & Burton, 2011). Organizational change is also prominent in the sport industry as sport and physical activity organizations are increasingly adjusting aspects of their organizations such as structures, policies, values, objectives and directions (Cunningham, 2002). Within the sport industry, youth sport, in particular, is experiencing significant pressures to change.

With millions of children participating in a wide variety of activities, participation in youth sport has become an experience that is both accepted and established as a beneficial part of a child's life (Torres & Hager, 2007). However, Lin, Chalip and Green (2016) argued that the positive impacts of youth sport do not occur fully without thoughtful planning. As such, perceptions including a strong focus on winning, over-emphasis on competition, potential of reaching elite level sport, adult control, as well as, injury and abuse, have led to a strong multitude of criticism and the notion that youth sport programs are facing crisis (Legg, Snelgrove, & Wood, 2016; Torres & Hager, 2007). Thus, reform may generate a healthier environment and understanding of the expectations and experiences of youth sport participants in order to maximize the benefits of one's involvement in sport (Lin et al., 2016; Torres & Hager, 2007).

Minor hockey in Canada is one youth sport context that could benefit from change. Often regarded as 'Canada's game,' hockey is notorious for its acknowledgement as more than just a sport, but a national identity and cultural representation of an entire

country. Thus, involvement in hockey holds personal and social significance for many Canadians. Research conducted by The First Shift (2016), a program designed to remove barriers affecting hockey participation, revealed that 90% of Canadian kids do not play hockey. This statistic is surprising given the passion for and claim Canada has on the sport. Recently, participation in minor hockey has fluctuated and from 2008-09 to 2009-10, Hockey Canada lost 8,000 players despite showing an increase in girls' hockey participation (Campbell & Parcels, 2013). Similarly, Campbell and Parcels (2013) acknowledged that if current participation rates continued to hold, by 2016, Hockey Canada stood to lose 30,000 players aged ten to fourteen from their most prominent age demographic.

A decline in youth hockey enrollment can be attributed to a multitude of difficulties facing both those considered traditional hockey families (i.e., traditionally Canadian born, middle to upper class) and those referred to as new or non-hockey families. These constraints include the high cost of equipment and registration in comparison to other sports, time commitment and inconvenience of schedules for parents, growing concerns for individuals' safety and well-being, as well as a high focus on the seriousness and competition of games (Hockey Canada, 2013). Each of these constraints may warrant specific program or policy changes. For example, a change in program design may be a beneficial modification to address concerns related to competition and sport enjoyment (e.g., Legg et al., 2016). Recently, other sports and their respective organizations have modified their games in an effort to ensure that youth participants focus on fun and skill development by reducing the emphasis on winning. For example, in 2014, the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA) mandated the removal of scorekeeping,

standings, and reduced field sizes and travel for youth participants under 12 years of age (Legg et al., 2016). However, hockey in Canada has been slow to make similar changes.

The current study seeks to investigate the potential modification of the way ice surfaces are used, consisting of cross-ice segments, by minor hockey organizations across Canada (see Figure 1). Considered a recent trend in youth hockey, cross-ice play is not a mandatory or age specific initiative, but rather a subset of Hockey Canada's 'Initiation Program,' being adopted sporadically by both provincial and regional hockey associations throughout Canada. As stated by the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA), the goal of the cross-ice program changes are to give youth a lasting and positive experience with their first interaction with hockey, in parallel with Hockey Canada's Long- Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD). In sum, a smaller ice surface creates more opportunity for puck contact resulting in enhanced puck skills, shooting skills and opportunities, as well as an increase in repetitions for goalies (OMHA, 2016). Along with the added benefit of a more efficient use of ice time, resulting in lower costs, cross-ice hockey allows children to develop self-confidence, experience personal achievement, and develop their hockey senses and reactions at a younger age, while becoming contributing members of a team effort as a larger ice surface often hinders these opportunities for participants (OMHA, 2016).

Alterations to sport organizations often encompass challenges related to the diversity of opinions and differences in the multitude of stakeholder sentiments, even when change is warranted (Legg et al., 2016; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). However, it remains unclear as to the types of pressures that hockey organizations face, why these organizations believe them to be worthy of attention, and the mechanisms or

factors that enable or resist change as a result of the pressures. It is anticipated that addressing these gaps in the sport management literature will help extend the integrative model of organizational change (see Figure 2) developed by Legg et al. (2016).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to conceptualize the process of change, Cunningham (2002), proposed the *Integrative Model of Organizational Change* based on institutional theory, population ecology, strategic choice, and resource dependence, as a way to explain the development and progression of change from one template to another. Subsequently, based on an empirical study, Legg et al., (2016) presented a modified version of the original model that proposed the implementation of a communication stage, the possibility of acceptance or rejection in the change process, and identified additional factors that affect the change process. To illustrate the changes identified within minor hockey organizations in Canada, and the use of cross-ice structural reforms as a suggested new template, the modified integrative model of organizational change proposed by Legg et al. (2016) will serve as the sensitizing theoretical framework. The remainder of this section describes the model.

### **Organizational Template**

The organizational template reflects the current initiatives and processes deployed within an organization, representing the values that hold an organization together, as well as the concepts of meaning and understanding of the culture and practices the organization has in place (Frontiera, 2010). This structure and regularized behaviours are the results of ideas, values, and attitudes held by an organization and its members (Frontiera, 2010; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Within similar fields, organizations often

develop a sense of isomorphism, where their behaviours and common practices tend to mimic what other organizations have done and found to be successful (Danylchuk, Snelgrove, & Wood, 2015; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). Organizations are isomorphic in their practices in order to gain legitimacy (Washington & Patterson, 2011). A move towards isomorphism often yields standardization in operations (Washington, 2004), producing a trend described as an ‘iron cage,’ where “organizational change occurs as a process that makes organizations more similar and not necessarily more efficient or successful” (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011, p. 203).

One limitation of the organizational change model presented by Cunningham (2002) and Legg et al. (2016) is the lack of recognition of other practices at play that are influential in the continued adoption of the status quo. For example, the concept of *institutional work* may be instructive in addition to isomorphism. Such a perspective recognizes the importance of individual actors and organizations in sustaining institutional practices (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Such recognition is important as Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca (2011) noted that, often, organizations and “large-scale social and economic changes” (p. 52) are at the forefront of institutional studies. While in opposition, the perspectives and experiences of individuals who have been involved within an organization and its structure are often overlooked (Lawrence et al., 2011). Institutional work refers to “the practices of individual and collective actors aimed at creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence et al., 2011, p. 52). In regards to creating institutions, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), as well as Dowling and Smith (2016), defined institutional work as actors engaged in the actions that build, develop and produce institutions. This is followed by institutional maintenance, which



can be defined as “the reproduction and continuation of institutional practices such as rules and regulations” (Dowling & Smith, 2016, p. 7) that are associated with every day, taken-for-granted practices within an organization (Dowling & Smith, 2016; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Finally, disrupting institutions involves moving away from previous practices or norms within an organization (Dowling & Smith, 2016; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). The concept of institutional work highlights the idea that actors, or a collective of actors, can influence the practices and norms associated with an organization’s current template, while also affecting the need for change and disruption of these current practices (Lawrence et al., 2011).

An organization may move away from its current template towards a new organizational template due to a number of factors (Danylchuk, et al., 2015). This process is known as deinstitutionalization.

### **Deinstitutionalization**

Often, organizations tend to change their structures in order to conform to their institutional environments and the expectations defined as the prescribed ways to organize (Slack, 1997). The process of deinstitutionalization becomes prominent when there is a change in the organization’s environment, leaving once institutionalized ideas to be altered, exposing the organization to the possibility of change (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). As first identified by Oliver (1992), political, functional, and social pressures from both inside and outside of an organization are the major forces that lead to deinstitutionalization.

**Political pressures.** Political pressures refer to the practices within an organization and the legitimacy of these operations (Danylchuk, et al., 2015). These

political pressures often mount when the performance of an organization becomes a concern, members of the organization begin to take issue with the existing state of the organization, the growing need to innovate and evolve becomes prominent, and the external environments and external organizations become less reliable (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). Within sport, political pressures were outlined in research conducted by Danylchuk et al. (2015) that examined the status of women's participation in golf. In response to political pressures, the format of a women's golf league was altered to create a wider appeal in comparison to the previous design. The researchers found that the focal golf club needed to maintain membership numbers by pleasing as many female participants as possible, and was forced to innovate and modify programming as a response to the declining nationwide numbers in women's golf participation (Danylchuk, et al., 2015).

**Functional pressures.** The second factor contributing to deinstitutionalization is functional pressures. Cunningham (2002) noted that functional pressures occur when “questions arise concerning the efficacy of technical functions of the firm, which in turn, ultimately come back to concerns related to performance” (p. 280). Similarly, Legg et al. (2016) identified functional pressures as an influence on “an organization's desire to provide the best product or service possible and this desire can lead to change occurring” (p. 7). Functional pressures can initiate change in multiple ways. Oliver (1992) found that change occurs through these pressures when organizations and their goals become more specific in nature, when changes to economic environments become more useful or beneficial to the organization, when the competition for resources within an organizational field increases, and when the emergence of new information, data, and

technology can lead to change (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992).

**Social pressures.** Social pressures also affect deinstitutionalization by influencing whether an organization proceeds with its traditional or past practices, or abandons these methods for different and contemporary institutional approaches (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). By definition, social pressures include division or disintegration within an organization, disruption of past historical or traditional approaches of an entity, changes to laws, regulations or institutional rules within a field, as well as a breakdown in the structure and configuration of the organization (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992).

Overall, political, functional, and social pressures from both inside and outside of an organization's environment can have significant influences on a push for organizational change and the deinstitutionalization of traditional practices (Legg et al., 2016). However, not reflected in this model is an understanding of when pressures are more likely to lead to action by the organization. Conceivably, not all pressures are perceived as being worth addressing. Thus, this study seeks to develop an understanding of why some pressures are meaningful to an organization and lead to consideration of change.

Once an organization has decided upon change, it is important to effectively communicate change in order to alleviate resistance and successfully transition to a new template (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2011).

### **Communicating with Stakeholders**

Throughout relevant literature, the importance of communication during the change processes is evident (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016; Washington &

Hacker, 2005; Welty Peachy et al., 2011). As proposed by Legg et al. (2016), a communication stage was added to Cunningham's (2002) model of organizational change in order to "convey the importance of this step in the change process" (p. 28). Often, within discussions of institutional change, communication is neglected or moved to the background, as it is assumed that the process of communicating change is a straightforward procedure, allowing individuals to receive and send relevant information (Cornelissen, Durand, Fiss, Lammers, & Vaara, 2015). In reality, misunderstanding and confusion are often created during organizational change when information is not clearly or consistently delivered to all stakeholders (Legg et al., 2016). As a result of failed communication, attempted change is frequently met by resistance. However, by communicating effectively during the change process, leaders within these entities have the ability to control the flow of information, while being transparent with their intentions (Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2011).

As noted by Washington and Hacker (2005), understanding the reasons for change and implementation plans through effective communication can help reduce resistance. To expand, communication can be formal or informal. Formal communication represents exchanging information officially, where the communication and knowledge can be controlled, and organizations have the ability to "select channels, spokespersons, timing, venues, or forums of interaction" (Lewis, 2007, p. 187) for particular communication strategies. Comparatively, informal communication allows for information to be shared through different avenues without organizational control. Informal communication is considered less desirable from an organizational standpoint due to the prospect of inconsistent or incorrect interpretation of messaging by

stakeholders (Legg et al., 2016).

### **Rate Moderating Factors**

In contrast to the pressures that initiate change, there are a number of factors that can affect the change process and hinder or expedite the changes being implemented (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992). These factors include inertia, entropy and ambivalence. In addition to these key factors, organizational change literature often highlights the importance of individual leaders or actors who can affect the change process in both positive and negative ways. Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) argued that leaders' change-related actions are one of the most repeatedly acknowledged drivers of change and can often result in its success or failure. As such, the role of individual leaders within organizational change and its process can be identified as an additional rate moderating factor affecting the transition and movement to the next stages of the change process.

**Inertia.** Studies have noted the importance of inertia, entropy and ambivalence as aspects that influence organizational change (e.g., Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). Inertia refers to “persistent organizational resistance to changing architecture” (Hannan, Pólos, & Carroll, 2004, p. 214), or the aspects within an organization that constrain or erode change (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992). To expand, lack of support from within the organization, strong commitments to previous embedded practices, and personal opinions or lack of awareness are examples of ways inertia can impede and or slow down change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Dissatisfaction from stakeholders or those involved in an organizational setting plays a substantial role in the development of inertia and the response to change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Furthermore, Greenwood and Hinings (1996) argued that limiting inertia within an

organization involves understanding the various responses to the pressures of change.

**Entropy.** Entropy in organizations refers to a natural or expected change (Oliver, 1992). Organizational entropy is thought to speed up or help advance the change process (Cunningham, 2002). Often, entropy in organizations consists of change where minimal support for reform is needed and the organizational practices subjected to change frequently go unnoticed or are “taken-for-granted” (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Oliver, 1992). In this instance, entropy is congruent with support from within an organization. The more the change is supported, or the more commitment seen from groups within an organization, the ease and speed at which changes can occur and be sustained (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). In response, strategic management and a systematic approach to change can help create support for change within organizations (Danylchuk et al., 2015). For example, Danylchuk et al. (2015) noted the importance of support in relation to change as the concept of entropy can be found within their study of women’s participation in golf. In order to successfully implement changes regarding a new format within a women’s golf league, the use of influential women were used in order to act as an internal change agent that helped create support and commitment for the initiatives being proposed (Danylchuk et al., 2015). For this reason, a smoother transition and marginal resistance to the new format was created (Danylchuk et al., 2015).

**Ambivalence.** Ambivalence is the third factor that may affect the change process and is defined as having inconsistent, uncertain, or mixed thoughts, feelings or actions to circumstances of change (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). As argued by Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012), ambivalence gives opportunity to create an encompassing

outlook on the attitudes that impact organizational change and could be beneficial to include within theoretical frameworks in order to evolve organizational theory. The idea of indifference or ambivalence is often overlooked or undervalued as a response to change, as this uncertainty could be considered the most prominent response for individuals (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). In many cases, it may be difficult for individuals to immediately form an opinion or decide whether to reject or accept change within an organization (Piderit, 2000; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). Fineman (2006) indicated that responses to change can vary extensively, and that numerous feelings can be present towards the changes being made, not simply just positive or negative. As identified by Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012), factors including “intrapersonal conflict, perceived lack of institutional support, managerial turnover, and previous negative experience with change” (p. 179) can lead an initial response of ambivalence towards thoughts of inertia or entropy as a reaction to the change process.

**Individual leaders.** Individual leaders, often referred to as champions of change, are recognized and respected members of an organization that can play a significant role in the change process (Chrusceil, 2008). Change champions can be identified as those who promote improvement and show encouragement towards “enthusiasm and confidence about the success of the innovation,” as well as those who “get the right people involved and persist under adversity” (Howell & Shea, 2006, p. 181). As outlined by Danylchuk et al. (2015), the individual acts of leadership within an organization are imperative as they are considered an influential part in developing a sense of willingness to change and an ability to move away from previously established templates within an organization. Similarly, Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) expanded on this concept

by stating that, although a leader's action, as a result of his/her power and authority within an organization, can be viewed as an influencing aspect of change, it is clear that a stronger transition and reception toward change can occur. For instance, when those within an organization visibly see authority figures who are committed to the proposed initiatives and are actively involved in interacting with employees throughout the change process, support for potential change can be advanced (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010).

Furthermore, Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) found that leaders can maintain momentum in introducing change in numerous ways. These actions include "paying attention to the progress of the change initiative, removing obstacles encountered, developing appropriate structures and establishing necessary monitoring mechanisms, as well as communicating the relationship between the change efforts and organizational success" (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010, p. 183). In sum, leaders play a prominent role in influencing and maintaining change initiatives.

Also important is the style of leadership exemplified by change champions. To expand, Slack and Hinings (1992) highlighted the findings of several researchers that identify the prominence of a transformational leadership style and its significance to individuals in the change process. Transformational leadership can be noted as being visionary in nature as it appeals to the higher needs of employees of feeling valued, while associated with supporting and maximizing the full potential of those within an organization (Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996; Welty Peachey et al., 2011). Slack and Hinings (1992) noted that leaders who possess a transformational style of leadership are able to generate commitment and normalize change in organizations.



### **Acceptance or Rejection of Template**

Legg et al. (2016) suggested that the possibility of either accepting or rejecting the implemented change exists. Rejection of change marks resistance from stakeholders or an organizational lack of commitment towards a new template. If change is rejected, the organization and its stakeholders can revert back to the original organizational template that was in place, or modify the proposed changes by returning to the creation of a new template stage (Legg et al., 2016). Conversely, acceptance of organizational change can take place for numerous reasons. For example, while researching women's participation in golf, Danylchuk et al. (2015) discovered that acceptance of the changes made to the league's formatting were welcomed due to the support of fun, sociability, inclusivity, and flexibility within the alterations and throughout the change process. Additionally, Legg et al. (2016) mentioned that control over available information, education or support for new environments, and inclusion of stakeholders in the decision-making process aided in the acceptance of organizational changes being made to local youth soccer clubs in Ontario. As organizations and stakeholders begin to accept change, the move towards the recognition and application of a new organizational template becomes prominent.

### **Implementation Moderating Factors**

As the change process gains acceptance towards the new proposed template, multiple factors play an influential role in the pace at which an organization reaches the final stage of organizational change. These factors are considered implementation moderating factors, and consist of an organization's capacity for action, resources dependence, power dependency, and the existence of an available alternative (Cunningham, 2002; Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016).

**Capacity for action.** Capacity for action signifies an organization's ability to initiate change, while managing the process of moving or changing from one template to another (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Greenwood and Hinings (1996) noted that, in order for this process to occur, an organization needs to have a clear understanding of the direction in which it is heading, the ability and expertise to succeed with the new objective, and the capability to reach organizational goals. Overall, in order for organizations to accept change, the capacity for action within an organization needs to be present. When paired with other influences, the capacity for action within an organization is considered one of a multitude of enabling factors that helps drive organizational change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

**Resource dependence.** Cunningham (2002) noted "competition for valuable resources plays a valuable role in the adoption of institutional norms" (p. 284). Resource dependency is considered an additional factor that influences organizational change as many youth sport organizations depend on their surrounding environments in order to be sustainable (Cunningham, 2002; Legg et al., 2016). Resource dependency can impact the opportunities available for change and an organization's willingness to change, due to the level of dependency an organization has on outside organizations for essential resources (Cunningham, 2002; Danylchuk et al., 2015). As resources become scarce, organizations become more at risk as they depart from "standard practice in their pursuit of alternative resources" (Sherer & Lee, 2002, p. 103). For example, to successfully create and implement a change to the Canadian sport system, National Sport Organizations (NSO) conformed to the suggested changes by Sport Canada in order to secure and continue receiving resources from the superior governing body (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2002).

**Power dependency.** Welty Peachey and Bruening (2011) defined power in the context of change as “the ability of one party to bring about desired outcomes despite resistance” (p. 204). Without power, meaningful change within an organization is difficult to achieve (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Varying levels of influence on change is associated with power dependencies, as the more power a stakeholder(s) has, the more influence it brings (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). In regards to change, power can be influential when key stakeholders support the concepts of change, but conversely, will be met with resistance due to lack of support from those with authority (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Although the concept of power dependency is an important factor in enabling various sequences of action (Amis et al., 2004), the alternative opportunities available in relation to change also play a key role within the change process (Cunningham, 2002).

**Available alternative.** An available alternative refers to the different or new options available to organizations, excluding their current template, which may be a possibility for change (Cunningham, 2002). Alternatives and alternative templates are often developed by dissatisfied groups within an organization and tend to respond to evolving directions and recommendations within an organization’s environment (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Often, the status quo or original template can come into question or considered for change, creating corrosion within an organization (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). This lack of commitment towards the original organizational template in place can lead to an increased demand towards exploring an available alternative within a profession or organization (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Similarly, Cunningham (2002) argued that, “when organizational actors realize an alternative to the

current template and have the power capacity for change, the organization will move from existing practices to more desired end states” (p. 281).

### **A New Organizational Template**

The organizational change process is considered complete when an organization begins to take on a new template and abandons a previous template or way of operating (Legg et al., 2016). The implementation of a new organizational template signifies the acceptance of the changes within an organization and the move toward new practices and procedures developed throughout the change process. Although a new organizational template is initiated within an organization, it is important to continuously consider the reasons behind the successful approval of the new organizational structure in order to develop a larger understanding of the successes and challenges of implementing organizational change (Danylchuk et al., 2015).

### **Research Questions**

Drawing on the modified integrative model of organizational change proposed by Legg et al. (2016), the following research questions were examined in the context of minor hockey organizations in Ontario, Canada.

1. What pressures are minor hockey organizations facing?
2. Why do minor hockey organizations believe these pressures to be worthy of attention?
3. What are the sources of resistance that minor hockey organizations perceive to exist when considering a potential change such as cross-ice play?
4. What factors do minor hockey organizations believe will increase their likelihood of successfully implementing change such as cross-ice play?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants in the current study consisted of multiple stakeholder groups including coaches, board members, and executive decision makers within both regional and provincial governing minor hockey associations in Ontario, Canada (see Figure 3 for a visual representation of the governance structure of hockey in Ontario). Provincially, executive decision makers from the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA), a central governing hockey organization in Ontario, were recruited. Regionally, participants included coaches and board members from the Windsor Minor Hockey Association (WMHA), who fall under OMHA jurisdiction, but have yet to implement the cross-ice changes within their respective organization. Conversely, coaches and board members from the Essex Minor Hockey Association (EMHA), who also fall under OMHA jurisdiction, were recruited as they have implemented the cross-ice changes within their association.

In total, 12 participants were recruited. This total included two executive decision makers from the OMHA, five board members (3 WMHA, 2 EMHA), and five coaches (3 WMHA, 2 EMHA) who currently coach or have recent experience coaching the relevant age groups associated with the current study (i.e., ages 10 and under). Of the four participants recruited from the EMHA, two held dual roles as they served as both a board member and a coach for the organization, creating a wider perspective and understanding of their respective associations. All participants in the current study were over 18 years old and were provided pseudonyms throughout the research process in order to maintain participant confidentiality throughout the research process. Involving these diverse

stakeholder groups helped provide a comprehensive understanding of the changes facing minor hockey in Ontario, while providing widespread perspectives and saturation from organizations that have either implemented or have yet to employ such changes. In sum, saturation was met as participants often held corresponding sentiments and provided similar themes when answering interview questions.

## **Recruitment**

University Research Ethics Board (REB) approval was obtained prior to any participant interaction, interviews, or data collection taking place. In order to recruit participants for the current study, e-mails were sent to potential participants outlining the context of the current study (see Appendix A). Contact information was considered publicly accessible and was obtained through each respective organization's website (e.g., <http://wmha.net/Staff/1003/>). Additionally, the researcher attended regional functions (i.e., tryouts, practices, and games) in order to gain direct access with the potential participants. Once contact was made, potential participants who were interested in partaking in the study selected the time and location of the interviews. Furthermore, a snowball sampling approach was employed to obtain further participants.

## **Data Collection**

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with each of the 12 participants. A semi-structured approach using interview guides (see Appendices B, C, and D) allowed me to identify important questions necessary for analysis, while keeping responses consistent within the theoretical framework. This approach also allowed me freedom to deviate and investigate relevant topics of interest regarding potential concepts involved with change initiatives that developed throughout the interview process. Thus, I

followed the flow of the information provided by participants rather than strictly the structure of the guide (Creswell, 2013). The interview guides, in regards to the relevancy of the questions asked, were unique to each group of participants (i.e., coaches, board members, and executive decision makers).

As previously stated, participants in the study selected the time and location of the interviews. Participants were informed of the confidentiality of their interviews and with the permission of the participant, was voice recorded to ensure accuracy of transcription, and accordingly, transcribed verbatim. Once the transcription process was complete, participants were contacted via e-mail and given the opportunity to review and make changes to the fully-transcribed interview, to ensure the correctness and contentment of the information they provided.. Due to time restraints, participants were given a period of 14 days to make any necessary changes to the transcribed document they wished to provide. No changes were made by any participant to their respective transcript during the review process.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected were initially coded according to their relationship to one of the four research questions. Next, data were coded inductively to address each research question within the context of the present study (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, this stage involved coding the data line-by-line and then grouping those codes together through a focused coding approach (Charmaz, 2006). Overall, this approach to data analysis facilitated the direct development of theory by first using an existing framework, contextualizing the findings, and refining the model (Prus, 1996).

## **Trustworthiness**

Tracey (2013) advocated for the importance of regularly discussing what methods and practices make for suitable and accurate qualitative research. The concept of *trustworthiness* has received widespread use in qualitative work as a way of describing rigorous qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described trustworthiness as consisting of four concepts, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Additionally, Wallendorf and Belk (1989) suggested the addition of integrity to the concepts previously specified by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The current study sought to ensure trustworthiness by implementing practices that achieved credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and integrity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wallendorf & Belk 1989).

Specifically, credibility refers to the accuracy and authenticity of the research. The current study attained credibility by voice recording interviews to ensure correctness, as well as through the multitude of proposed interview participants (i.e., coaches, board members, and executive decision makers) to achieve multivocality, which brought the research a variety of voices and opinions (Tracey, 2013). The use of the applied framework suggested by Legg et al. (2016) and the detailed description of the context under study, facilitated potential transferability. Dependability can be defined as reliability in the research process. Thus, practices taken to ensure dependability were the use of consistent and detailed interview guides, as well as demonstrating rigour through the length of interviews and the appropriateness of the types of questions asked (Tracey, 2013). Confirmability refers to the interpretation of data, highlighting the researcher's ability to construct the results displaying the participants' views and not the researcher's.



The process of allowing participants the opportunity to review, expand, and or exclude information from the fully-transcribed interview documents helped achieve confirmability in the research. Furthermore, and most importantly, providing extensive quotes to allow the reader to assess the conclusions drawn helped achieve confirmability (Prus, 1996). Finally, integrity was maintained throughout the research process by following procedural ethics (Tracey, 2013). As well, to guarantee transparency, a clear description of the researcher's personal stance and bias toward the current study appears in the Researcher's Background section located in Appendix E.

## **Findings**

Interviews with participants from the governing body of the OMHA as well as local associations of the WMHA and the EMHA, revealed a multitude of factors influencing the dynamics of potential change in minor hockey organizations in Ontario. The current findings first discuss the pressures for change facing these organizations, including why these pressures were considered important to the organizations. Additionally, the findings describe the presence of institutional work within the change process, including the concepts of both institutional maintenance and the disruption of institutions in a minor hockey context. The following section details the importance and influence of these concepts.

### **Pressures to Change**

Minor hockey associations in Ontario are experiencing substantial pressures to change. These pressures are continually generating the need to review and discuss the potential reform initiatives to programming and organizational operations within minor

hockey. The following section describes the pressures to change that organizations believe exist.

### **Identifying Pressures for Change**

**Parental expectations.** As outlined by study participants, high expectations from parents are one such example of the significant pressures placed on minor hockey organizations. As a parent himself, one coach from the EMHA articulated the notion of high parental expectations and pressures in minor hockey by stating, “Well, there are a lot of parental pressures on kids nowadays. I even find myself having to step back and say hey, he’s just a kid” (*Todd, Coach/Board Member, Essex*). Additionally, an OMHA executive decision maker identified that parents consider enrolling their children in minor hockey to be an investment in their child, with the expectation of a return on that investment (i.e., expectations of winning, skill development, reaching elite level sport, etc.): “I think more and more parents are putting their kids into programs, they cost money, they take up time, so they also have expectations” (*David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*).

In many cases, parental expectations facing minor hockey organizations and their stakeholders were present in the concept of winning or stressing the importance of winning on coaches. For example, one WMHA coach described the pressure he felt from parents in the following way: “Of course everyone wants to win, win all the time, you have to work through the parents to let them know that kids are there just to learn and you know, hopefully winning comes after” (*Pete, Coach, WMHA*).

**Costs of participation.** High costs to participating in hockey were also a central pressure facing minor hockey associations. As previously outlined, cost constraints,

including excessive prices for equipment and higher registration fees in comparison to other sports, are creating pressures for organizations to make modifications in their operations. For example, Bob, a WMHA coach, identified the intricacies of cost and its impact on participation:

I think the primary driver has to do with the fact that we live in an economy where parents are primarily workers and for that reason, a lot of it has to come down to money and the fact that hockey is one of the most expensive sports. You have to pay for the equipment, you have to pay for ice time, you have to pay for all sorts of different costs. Sharpening skates every couple of weeks or whatever it may be for your kids.

Similarly, a coach from the EMHA noted the financial challenges that families are facing and its impact on enrollment:

People can't afford to survive let alone put their kid in hockey. Your cheapest skate out there is probably \$75, you add a helmet on to that, that's another \$75. Some families can't afford that. So they are not, their kid might try it for a year, might not have the greatest interest, so it's an easy decision for the parents not to pursue it again. I think that is the biggest challenge, keeping kids involved. *(Todd, Coach/Board Member, Essex)*

As study participants have noted, organizations are recognizing that the high cost to play hockey has led to exclusivity in the sport. As outlined by all organizations, an EMHA board member identified a need to change in order to create more inclusive opportunities for participation:

I guess there are a lot of different ways, obviously, if you could make it more affordable so that, you always hear about kids that say I would love to play but we can't afford to or whatever. Obviously, if you could make it affordable across the line for anybody, then everyone that wants to participate is able to. Obviously, that would be the ultimate kind of thing, making it universal to everybody. *(Roy, Board Member, Essex)*

**Participation numbers.** Fluctuations in registration on a year-to-year basis was also a pressure facing those involved in minor hockey. As acknowledged by an OMHA executive decision maker, governing organizations are facing pressures to continually discover ways to attract and retain participants:

One, how do you attract new kids and also how do you keep the ones that are in, how do you keep them here, how do you retain them? Are they engaged, are they having fun, are they improving, are they having a good experience? All that stuff. *(David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA)*

At a community sport level, board members and coaches within their respective organizations also recognized the change in levels of participation. For instance, from the board's perspective, an EMHA member noted, "Some of the pressures are actually enrollment and numbers. Over the years, enrollment has dropped" *(Todd, Coach/Board Member, Essex)*. Similarly, other stakeholders, including coaches, also acknowledged a shortage of participation within their association, as one WMHA coach suggested, "Well from what I've heard, participation is down" *(Michael, Coach, WMHA)*. Furthermore, the fluctuations in participation in minor hockey has created other organizational challenges and pressures. To expand, WMHA coaches established that the prominent issue regarding

gaps in participants' skill levels are a result of the lack of participant numbers within their association:

Usually, you have tiers in house hockey but sometimes you don't have the capacity of having tiers because of the declining numbers that we have in hockey. So, for that reason, the problem is you're getting these gaps in skill levels so you're getting kids that are very skilled and kids that are not very skilled...the issue with that is you're still getting kids that are basically hung out to dry, for lack of better words, and they're basically not learning the skills. *(Bob, Coach, WMHA)*

**Being aware of diversity.** Attracting and retaining minor hockey players from diverse ethnic backgrounds was also noted by study participants as a pressure facing minor hockey organizations in Ontario. From the top down, governing bodies and associations documented a growing number of different ethnicities registering and participating in minor hockey. Members from the WMHA supported this concept as one coach observed, "I've noticed looking in the stands, you will see many different cultural families" *(Michael, Coach, WMHA)*. Additionally, board members from the same organization reinforced this change by saying, "We are definitely seeing more ethnic groups coming in which is great, some of these kids don't even know what hockey is" *(Karen, Board Member WMHA)*.

As the representation of the once typical hockey family begins to shift, organizations are facing challenges ensuring a more inclusive reach and scope of their programs. Often, organizations are seeing participants unfamiliar with the sport. Karen, a board member from the WMHA, acknowledged this sentiment stating that the majority of

these participants' backgrounds do not typically involve hockey including their parents, who grew up participating in, or watching, other sports. One board member from the WMHA gave context to one such challenge:

During our initial skate and scrimmages we had a kid come to the rink and he had skates and a helmet and nothing else. He didn't have a stick, and the next day he came and instead of hockey tape, he came with scotch tape all over the blade because he really had no clue and had never learned anything about it. You know the kids at school talked about it and he wanted to play...but there is definitely a lot more different groups of people that are trying it, it's just a matter of getting them more interested and getting the word out there. *(Karen, Board Member WMHA)*

Thus, minor hockey organizations have felt a pressure to adapt the way they attract and educate new participants from ethnic backgrounds who may be unfamiliar with hockey.

**Impact of influential organizations.** Governing organizations and their functions were considered influential in creating pressures for change within a hockey environment. Minor hockey organizations look to their national governing bodies as major influences to their operations: "I would say we, as an organization, we look to Hockey Canada for their leadership to see what they are seeing, you know, across the country and globally" *(David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA)*. Similarly, governing bodies in other countries were often viewed in high regard as their successes were significant or prominent to other associations and their hierarchies. Thus, creating an lasting influence on future decisions for potential change operations or program

implementations. For example, the successes of USA Hockey in mandating their cross-ice hockey program was discussed:

They have done a lot of, a couple pretty powerful video pieces that speak to the benefits of cross-ice hockey and also the, you know, the impact of what a similar scenario on adults would be...they put adults on a playing surface that is proportionately the same as what a child would face while being on full ice, so it is pretty compelling. *(Ryan, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA)*

Additionally, local hockey associations are influenced by other local hockey associations. For example, Roy, an EMHA board member, explained this situation by saying, “We are definitely aware of what goes on around us. Whether it be within our centre or outside of our centre locally.” Likewise, another EMHA board member provided a similar explanation:

Well, it is always good to look around and see what is working for other centres. If you see a stronger centre and something is working for them, obviously you are going to try and copy it to try and develop your kids as best as you can. You want to try and get the best out of what you can give and if you see something working with another centre, of course, you are going to develop and work towards that.

*(Jim, Coach/Board Member, Essex)*

In discussing their relationship with a nearby association, the board members from the WMHA noted the importance of keeping up or responding to the operations and successes of associations in the area:

I think [it's] us on them and them on us. It is very competitive. If you look at it, technically it is still a business. You want enrollment, you want the numbers, and

you want the kids to come, and their parents, and their families and you know if the closest association to you is doing something that you are not, you kind of have to look at why are they doing that, how are they doing that...so I definitely would factor it in. I think that we kind of check out what they are doing and I think everyone is aware of each other doing it and checking everyone out, and saying 'hey what is Riverside up to now' and that kind of thing but, it's definitely a competitive factor for sure. *(Karen, Board Member WMHA)*

**Competition in youth market.** Competition in youth sport was determined to be another important pressure facing minor hockey organizations in Ontario. Participants believed that other interests, excluding hockey, have created a competitive marketplace in attracting new and retaining previous participants. Roy, a board member from the EMHA, was able to highlight the growing opportunities available to youth:

In the winter time, pretty much all you had to do was play hockey and summer time maybe you had soccer or baseball, whereas now, kids can do travel hockey, they can do house league, they can do travel volleyball, basketball, you know there are so many things available to kids all year round.

Similarly, the challenges related to an increase in competition for youth participants was also recognized by the provincial governing body. An executive decision maker from the OMHA further supported the notion of growing competition as a pressure to minor hockey organizations:

You know, certainly there is way more competition for hockey, it's not the only thing available to kids now. One, there is other sports, we certainly have just competition for youth and youth sports, but then there are other things. Again, all



the other interests kids may have. You know music, maybe not team sports, maybe its skateboarding or snowboarding or whatever. There are lots of options, lots of choices, so you know hockey isn't the de facto [choice] in winter. (*David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*)

While other sports offer an available alternative to minor hockey, competition within minor hockey itself was noted to be an additional pressure facing associations. As different programs in Ontario function under certain operations and offer specific programs, the competitive nature of hockey programming creates opportunity for combative programs or alternatives to what is being offered by an organization. For example, an OMHA executive decision maker discussed the reactions of implementing program changes, using cross-ice hockey as an example:

There is competing programming. We see it all the time. If someone only has cross-ice hockey available to them in their local organization and they are not necessarily or don't necessary embrace the concept and they believe it's in the best interest of their child to have full ice hockey elsewhere, if there is an entrepreneur that is offering that programming or competing program elsewhere, they may choose to see that out. That's a challenge and it's a reality that we live within our market place. (*Ryan, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*)

### **Organizational Importance to Pressures**

Study participants clearly identified the accumulating pressures for potential change within minor hockey. Although change was not being mandated through any superior governing bodies, the significance of a prospective need for change reveals the importance of these pressures to each of these organizations. In response, participants

identified these pressures for change as important to their organizations as they had the ability to fulfil organizational values, helped realize a need for improvement, and assisted in weighing the costs and benefits to a potential change.

**Fulfilling organization values.** The importance of organizational values in acknowledging pressures for change were recognized through the statements of the study participants. Ryan, an executive decision maker from the OHMA, supported the importance of organizational values throughout all operations of an organization by stating, “Yeah, they should always be sort of underlying everything that we do. They should be sort of part of all the conversations we have.” In most cases, study participants felt that the importance of the pressures for change facing their organizations needed to fulfill organizational values before being seriously considered as a potential change.

To expand, the organizational value of inclusivity was frequently highlight within the responses of study participants. David, an executive decision maker from the OHMA, noted the importance of creating an inclusive environment in minor hockey as he indicated, “We have to look at the benefit of everyone.” Furthermore, from a coaches’ perspective, Bob, from the WMHA, discussed the importance and values of offering programs that were more comprehensive and inclusive to its participants as he explained, “I want to see them [participants] coming out not isolated. I want them to have lots of touches on the puck, I want them to have fun while they’re out there and I want them to feel included” (*Bob, Coach, WMHA*). In this instance, the potential change to offering a cross-ice program was identified as a viable change initiative that supported the value of inclusivity within minor hockey organizations. He further explained his support in this regard by declaring:

Cross-ice does all those things where full ice can be difficult, because you get players that are isolated, you get players that are not getting into the play as much as they would like and that causes discouragement and I don't want to see that.

So, I think that I would like that implemented. *(Bob, Coach, WMHA)*

Similarly, the need to create positive experiences for participants was considered another important value to organizations in considering pressures for change. From the top down, organizations noted the prominence of a positive experience within a program to be an asset in participant and stakeholder satisfaction. As discussed by David, an executive decision maker with the OMHA, associations held strong organizational values towards experiences of all participants, regardless of skill level, capabilities, or past involvement in hockey:

Sometimes we have to ensure, as much as we want to ensure those entry level players to be engaged and have a good experience, but we might have kids in that program that have been in there since they have been 4 or 5 years old, so they also have to be challenged. *(David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA)*

Additionally, the importance of creating a positive experience for stakeholders was embodied as a value to organizations in minor hockey as one board member discussed the drawbacks to current practices within her organization that may be hindering the experience of some players. Karen, a board member with the WMHA, discussed the pressures facing her association and the importance of creating a better experience for its participants:

This year we don't have any tiers in Atom so everyone mixed in. That is kind of a struggle from what I see with kids. If they are new, they really struggle to even

touch the puck and if they are a higher caliber player, they are bored. So, if they don't put the tiers in, I have a problem with that. (*Karen, Board Member WMHA*)

In a similar instance, participant enjoyment was equally derived to be an additional organizational value of significance in internalizing pressures for change. In most cases, stakeholders cited the importance of fun and the enjoyment of younger participants within a program, regardless of stakeholder expectations. For example, one coach from the EMHA, further expressed this concept by stating, "You just want them to be having fun skating and going to play as of now" (*Hank, Coach, Essex*). Equally, board members felt a similar importance towards fun and enjoyment as they identified the presence and benefits of such values entrenched within the already existing programs being offered:

Our program, especially in the young levels, we are always trying to keep it fun and very interactive and all of them are having fun doing whatever...so, the biggest thing, well you know, just keep it fun for the kids and if they are having fun doing whatever they are doing on the ice then they will probably stick with it. (*Roy, Board Member, Essex*)

Accordingly, as organizations considered pressures for change, the change initiative of implementing a cross-ice hockey program was discussed as supporting the values of participant fun and enjoyment. As illustrated by an OMHA executive decision maker, "Cross-ice tends to put the focus on skill development and the players having fun more so than the expectation of more traditional outcomes" (*Ryan, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*). Therefore, the potential change initiative of implementing cross-ice hockey

within an association was in accordance with the organizational values that were considered important to minor hockey organizations and its stakeholders.

Finally, skill development was also noted by study participants as an organizational value held in high regard. In reference to acknowledging pressures for change, skill development was a central factor in considering potential change initiatives, as noted by Jim, an EMHA coach and board member, when he stated, “Really, it is about developing kids and their skills, that’s the biggest thing.” Furthermore, in reference to implementing a cross-ice program within their respective association, skill development, one of many benefits of such change, was often at the forefront of considering a change in programming. This concept was summarized by the statements of WMHA board member, Robert:

Cross-ice hockey for little kids should be implemented in every single association. Maximize the ice, maximize the touches. They don’t need to compete on a big rink, they don’t need to light up a scoreboard...It’s all about development and if you get these kids developed properly then they have a chance of really hitting their max potential. *(Robert, Board Member WMHA)*

Likewise, the benefits of implementing such programming was widely apparent to study participants. In most cases, stakeholders within an organization were able to easily espouse the benefits, including skill development, for participants of a cross-ice program:

I think that one of ways that you can effectively teach those kids more fundamental skills is through cross-ice and that’s because they’re going to have the puck more. They’re going to have less room to play in. They’re going to have more challenging opportunities...they’re also going to get a lot more shooting

opportunities, the goalies are going to get a lot more practice from shooting. So, those are just a couple things that come to mind but I think in a younger age group, narrowing in on those fundamental skills are more important than teaching things like breakouts and systems and for those reasons, I think that cross-ice could be effective for the younger ages for sure. *(Bob, Coach, WMHA)*

In essence, the importance of skill development within an organization was evident in recognizing the pressures for change facing minor hockey associations. The organizational value of developing participants was also existent in discussions regarding the potential or present adoption and support of a cross-ice program.

**Recognizing a need to improve.** An organization's recognition of a need to improve was an additional response found in an association's acknowledgment and assessment on the importance of pressures for change facing their respective organizations. As noted by Ryan, an executive decision maker from the OMHA, "I think there is always room for improvement and it can happen on a number of fronts." First, from a provincial level, stakeholders from governing bodies noted a shift in focus from elite level sport to improving grassroots level programs. For instance, participants recognized the need for improvement in multiple levels of sport. Responses such as the following from Ryan of the OMHA, presented this perception, "Certainly areas of focus from a national level right down to the grassroots level. It's a shared priority." Similarly, another executive decision maker from the OMHA, David, mirrored this shift in focus on improving programs as he stated, "Not just at the elite level but I think that a lot of it now is coming down to the grassroots level." Therefore, the need to improve from an

organizational perspective was an imminent response to pressure facing minor hockey organizations.

Acknowledging pressures for change in identifying a need for improvement was also discovered through stakeholder opinions of the organization and its programs. Stakeholders, such as parents, were identified by participants as one group that often contributed their opinion on the need for improvement. As outlined in this instance by Karen, a WMHA board member: “There is always, always, parents and people that have input that you guys should do this and you should do that.” As members of their respective associations spoke to the involvement of parents in identifying ways to improve, study participants also noted the importance of valuing the opinions of parents as a stakeholder group within the change process. For instance, this idea was acknowledging by executive decision maker David of the OMHA, “I think you have to be in touch with what is happening out in the rinks with parents.” As well, participants also credited the prominence of other stakeholder groups in discussing the pressures to change and a need to improve: “It’s something that you have to sit down with your people that are more important like your Director of Coaching, your Vice Presidents, who are down there in the trenches. They will have some major input” (*Andy, Board Member, WMHA*). Overall, valuing stakeholder opinions held strong sentiments for identifying important pressures of change leading to the need to improve within an organization.

**Weighing the costs and benefits.** Likewise, pressures for change were identified as important to organizations in assisting with weighing the costs and benefits to a potential change. For instance, as organizations and its stakeholders acknowledged the pressures for change, the response of implementing a cross-ice program was discussed

within the WMHA. As this modification become a viable option for change, study participants noted the importance of weighing the costs and benefits of employing new initiatives:

Changing the whole game of hockey, you know your numbers, is it a benefit because you get more kids on the ice? Do you use less ice? You know what I mean, so now parents go, you say, well you're sharing the ice with two other groups, how come the cost is this? So, it changes a lot of things...I honestly don't know maybe it would be the less use of ice. Maybe it would be less ice gets more kids on the ice in the same hour, but the downfall is if you put, say 60 kids on the ice at one time, where do they all change? (*Andy, Board Member WMHA*)

Organizational expectations were also at the forefront of weighing the costs and benefits to a potential change. Interview participants were more inclined to be in favour of the change initiative if the potential change met the expectations of the organization. To expand, one board member from the WMHA used the hypothetical example of player safety as a benefit to a change initiative. As an organization, maintaining safety may be an important expectation and if the change meets such expectations, the benefits outweigh the costs. This concept was further outlined by WMHA board member, Robert, when he said: "If it saves one kid from getting crippled or hurt, breaking his collar bone or wrecking a career, twisting a knee, it's worth the pain."

### **Institutional Work**

As minor hockey associations experienced pressures to change, study participants described efforts to maintain current practices (i.e., institutional maintenance) and efforts to disrupt the status quo (i.e., institutional disruption). This section describes how study



participants saw institutional maintenance and disruption in action in a minor hockey context.

### **Institutional Maintenance**

An analysis of the interviews suggest that the status quo is maintained within minor hockey through four major ways, including (a) values and history attached to tradition, (b) constrained organizational resources, (c) operational challenges with change, and (d) influential stakeholders. This section describes these four mechanisms of institutional maintenance in the context of the present study.

**Values and history attached to tradition.** Tradition in the sport of hockey was a common explanation behind resistance to change. In conjunction with the responses of minor hockey organizations in Ontario, hockey as a sport has been traditionally slow to make alterations in programming. The concept of tradition as a source of resistance was best described by OMHA executive decision maker, David, as he outlined, “We do have to fight some of our traditions...I think we fight our traditional history. Where we come from, what it looks like...I think that sometimes your strengths become your weaknesses.” As such, participants agreed that tradition played a key role in resisting change and continuing current organizational practices. Similarly, within the context of tradition, generational differences also created challenges in initiating change. For example, WMHA coach Bob, explained these obstacles to creating change and potential change initiatives:

I think one of the biggest challenges is going to be able to convince people who are so culturally invested in the way things have been for our entire lifetime with hockey. So, it may be a generational divide between an older generation, say our

parents and our grandparents, who don't understand those things versus the way that data-driven research has shown that it's going to be productive and it's going to be beneficial to that kid...you're still going to have parents who don't accept it and that's partly because I think their attitude and partly because they are so culturally invested in the past and the ways that hockey has always been and they don't want that to change because they want the same thing that they had for their kids.

In some instances, stakeholders felt that current practices reinforced what they believed traditional hockey should look like and whether change may affect this image. This concept was noted by OMHA executive decision maker, David, as he explained, "I think going forward it's going to be what does traditional hockey look like and what is traditional hockey?" To expand, in regards to potential change initiatives or the redefining of traditional hockey, participants identified the objectives of attracting more players (*Karen, Board Member WMHA*), as well as providing a culture that is inclusive and safe for players to enjoy the game (*Ryan, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*). Although these organizational goals may require change, concerns were raised by participants as to what stakeholders would think of the new look and feel of hockey and its departure from tradition. The concept was further reinforced by Jim, an EMHA coach and board member as he disclosed, "Well, it is always the scare factor of, 'this has worked for so long, why change it right?'"

**Constrained organizational resources.** Availability of resources for organizations was an important factor present in participant responses to resisting potential change. To expand, in regards to achieving the organizational goals of skill

development and bettering hockey participants, Roy a board member from the EMHA, noted the necessity for more resources when he mentioned, “More ice time, more qualified coaching and qualified skill development people,” were needed in order to attain such goals. He expanded on the importance of resources within an organization as he further explained:

Sometimes it’s just not feasible, whether it be due to cost of running certain programs or sometimes it’s time management, just not enough time. For example, we are always pressed with the amount of ice time available in Essex, we would like to do more stuff for player development or coach development or things where we can give more people opportunities to improve, but if we don’t have extra ice time to put more people on the ice then it just doesn’t happen right? So, there are some things that are handcuffs...again, that all often goes back into what is feasible? Can we afford to, do we have the manpower, do we have the capability or the ice time and it kind of falls back into that discussion again. *(Roy, Board Member, Essex)*

Human resources was another resource identified as a constraint to change. Specifically, associations identified a change from current practices as a potential danger in enticing volunteers. For example, within the WMHA, one board member noted, “You know it’s hard enough to get volunteers in this day and age with everyone being so busy, now you are going to ask them to do more work” *(Robert, Board Member, WMHA)*. Additionally, another board member agreed with this concept, as they felt that change may have an effect on the organization’s ability to find volunteers: “I think that coaches

have enough responsibility, and [implementing cross-ice] could damper getting more volunteers” (*Andy, Board Member, WMHA*).

In contrast to lack of resources needed for change, an organization may not be aware of the availability of resources to them. For example, members of the OMHA felt that there has been an increase in the availability of resources for hockey associations: “I would say certainly the resources and the education available to coaches, to parents, to associations, there is way more of that” (*David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*). Similarly, in reference to the change initiative of cross-ice hockey, an additional OMHA member noted:

The program is available and is ready for anyone who wants to implement it. The tools are there. No one has to go out and invent this thing, it’s already ready to go, I think that is the key thing. It’s that all the tools are there for an association that, if an association calls us tomorrow and says hey, we really want to go all in on and offer cross-ice hockey then our answer to them is going to be well, we have the tools to help you do that, we can help you do that. (*Ryan, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*)

Thus, both the lack of resources and knowledge regarding such availability created a resistance to potential change initiatives within minor hockey associations.

**Operational challenges with change.** It was also discovered that challenges specific to the organization’s operations produced resistance, leading to further maintenance of current practices. To expand, from a governing body standpoint in minor hockey, executive decision makers from the OMHA outlined the challenges they faced in regards to change within their organizations:

I guess first and foremost we are big. We are the largest minor hockey association in the world just by volume, by number of participants. We also cover a large geographical area...so there is challenges there, one it's good to be big but sometimes it is tough to turn a big ship. (*David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*)

Similarly, Ryan, an additional executive decision maker from the OMHA, mirrored similar sentiments regarding the difficulties concerning the size of the organization, "You know, your strengths can be your weaknesses too, so the layers of administrations can sometimes get in the way of good decision making being expedited so that sometimes can be a challenge."

Minor hockey organizations also outlined differences in operations and consistency in programming from association to association as a factor affecting change. In response to programming within these associations, Todd, an EMHA coach and board member noted the issue that, "Every single centre does it differently, it's amazing...but every centre does things so drastically different." This challenge was further identified by OMHA executive decision maker, Ryan:

Some of the challenges that are unique to Ontario is you have a number of different organizations that are administering the game, so those organizations are not always doing the same thing, so it is important that there is a consistent delivery model among all organizations.

Thus, in addition to having the requisite resources, organizations believe they would struggle to implement change because of operational facets of their organizations.

**Influential stakeholders.** Stakeholders within their respective organizations were also identified as factors that created resistance to change. Stakeholders such as parents, board members, and program participants were recognized as key contributors to maintaining current organizational practices. For instance, in reference to coaches and their involvement with a program, WMHA coach Pete noted parents as a challenge to both themselves as coaches and change initiatives as he said, “I think that the biggest barrier for coaches is parents. I think that would be the main barrier.” Other members of the WMHA also described the challenges seen with parents in hockey by saying, “Parents are always the issue, parents are always the final issue in anything” (*Karen, Board Member WMHA*). Karen, a board member of the WMHA, further described the role of parents by stating:

Parents are always difficult. If kids could just come and play hockey and that’s it, that would be great, it would be fantastic. Unfortunately, the parents come with them and they are not always, you know, for me I love watching my kids play and I just come there to do that. There are always going to be things like that, parents love to complain about everything. It doesn’t matter if they like it one day, the next day they don’t, it’s just one of those things where they just like to complain in general. Whether they are happy or whether something is bothering them, I feel like some parents would be very accepting of it (i.e., cross-ice hockey) and some parents will find a problem with it.

Additionally, board members of associations were described as key stakeholders influencing the continuation of current practices. Participants acknowledged the power and control that board members have within an organization and the influence they have

within the change process. This concept was further detailed by WMHA coach, Bob: “Especially people who have been the convenors and been the organizers of this league for such a long time and they’ve dedicated their life and their passion into it. And they feel like they’re running it good enough now.”

### **Institutional Disruption**

An analysis of the interviews with study participants suggest that disruption to the status quo may be possible within minor hockey through six mechanisms, including (a) educating stakeholders, (b) selling change, (c) leading change, (d) championing change, (e) formalizing change, and (f) leveraging the successes of other organizations. This section describes these six mechanisms of institutional disruption in the context of the present study.

**Educating stakeholders.** As previously mentioned, stakeholders played a crucial role in influencing the change process or maintaining current organizational practices. To expand, participants outlined the importance of educating these key contributors as an essential aspect of moving change forward. As outlined by Ryan, an OMHA executive decision maker, “There are some existing challenges just in terms of education. It’s all about education.” Additionally, other OMHA colleagues mirrored a similar importance, “I think the biggest challenge is educating them so they understand those benefits...why are we doing this? If they are armed, that makes their job easier” (*David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*).

Although the importance of educating stakeholders was recognized by governing bodies, participants continuously felt that educating themselves and other stakeholders about potential change throughout the change process was essential. Whether in reference

to board members, coaches, or parents, participants believed that being prepared or knowing the benefits of such change would help alleviate the resistance towards it. Todd, an EMHA coach and board member, reinforced the importance of education in regards to change as he noted, “That is probably the biggest barrier but the biggest detriment would be not educating your coaches, not educating your convenors on the benefits.”

Additionally, other participants from other organizations supported this claim. For example, WMHA coach Pete, referenced the significance of educating stakeholders using the program change of cross-ice hockey as an example: “You really have to work or provide information to the parents to show them the benefit of it. Again, the way things are studied these days and the science behind it, I think you have a better chance of that.”

Study participants also believed in a need for a more top-down approach to educating stakeholders. In one instance, in reference to a potential change, such as cross-ice hockey, coaches felt that the gap between understanding change and relaying such initiatives needed to be evaluated:

I think that all coaches need to attend another in-class lecture or coaching clinic about it. It would change the way every coach would have to help kids develop their skills and I think the organization itself would need to have a plan in place in how they are going to teach the coaches, and what would be the proper way to.

*(Michael, Coach, WMHA)*

Additionally, other coaches held similar sentiments. Bob of the WMHA was able to expand on the concept as the coach gave depth to the prominence of an organization’s ability and strategies to educate its stakeholders:



I think they want to work from a top-down approach. So, basically the top people in charge want to be informing coaches, holding meetings about what's going to be happening, getting perspectives from the coaches. And then the coaches are going to have a responsibility to explain this to parents. And then I also think that holding, not necessarily conferences, but meetings for parents to attend may also be an effective strategy.

**Selling change.** Selling the change initiatives was also another prominent response from study participants in regards to disrupting institutional practices and in favour of change. In order to sell potential change initiatives, it was identified that efficient communication and establishing support for the change were important factors in moving away from current organizational practices. In this instance, it was discovered that effective communication helped lead to a better understanding from stakeholders as revealed by Roy, an EMHA board member:

You will get a few people who will come to myself or a board member and say you know, why is this being done or why are we not doing it that way, then it just becomes more of the one-on-one conversation and it's just helping them understand on a one-on-one level.

As well, Roy, was able to further discuss the importance of competently communicating within minor hockey associations in order to reduce resistance and to help stakeholders better understand change initiatives:

Communication is always big. Whatever program you put in place, if it's a good program and you believe in it, you just have to communicate it and like I said, when you have resistance from people that, we'll say they grew up and have that

old school hockey mentality, when I was a kid this is how our coaches did it and that is how I want to coach. Sometimes when you believe in something you just have to keep communicating with them and keep trying to explain and help them understand as opposed to just trying to jam it down their throat. If you can make them understand, then obviously they are going to be a lot more receptive.

Participants also identified the notion of gaining support for change in order to successfully sell it within an organization. To expand, participants continued to acknowledge the need to understand change initiatives in order to create more support. On some occasions, participants outlined specific approaches to implementing change in order to assist in effectively selling the initiative. This was discussed by coach Bob, in reference to the potential of implementing a cross-ice hockey program with the WMHA, “Yeah. I mean it could be used as a pilot study for understanding how these things move forward, definitely. That’s going to be a very conservative approach I would say. I would argue that you could jump right into it.”

**Leading change.** In regards to disrupting institutional practices, people in positions of power within minor hockey associations were acknowledged as being an intricate part of the change process. In order to move forward with change initiatives, study participants recognized the need for support from the top level of an organization. In some instances, people in positions of power within an organization may not agree with potential change initiatives. For example, when discussing the potential implementation of a cross-ice program with the WMHA, one board member didn’t support such change as they clarified, “I just don’t think it would work out...it’s more

learning to skate so I don't know what the benefit would be going [with] the cross-ice hockey personally" (*Andy, Board Member WMHA*).

While change may not be supported by all those involved, in order to successfully implement change or move away from current practices, new leadership, stronger guidance within, or a more open-minded approach were suggested as potential solutions. In some cases, study participants believed that current practices have run their course within their respective organizations, as board members discussed the need for new leaders and influence within their associations:

I think they definitely need some fresh new volunteers. I know it's really hard to get that, not everyone likes to volunteer, but I definitely think that, as far as board members I think that they need to kind of see about getting new people involved and getting some fresh ideas, getting some new faces in there and that kind of thing. (*Karen, Board Member WMHA*)

Similarly, participants within their associations suggested a stronger presence of leadership and called for a better sense of guidance from those who hold higher positions. Bob, a WMHA coach, discussed this call for action in further detail:

I do think that there are some major things that they can improve on. One of those things is the organization, so the people in charge in terms of the convenors, some of the top people. I feel like they could do more things for the coaches and maybe be more involved in making the coach's experience better. It seems like they're not as involved as they could be, so that's one improvement that they could make.

**Championing change.** In successfully establishing and sustaining change initiatives, study participants discussed a strong need for a champion of change. To

expand, it was discovered that participants believed in the presence of a champion who supports and encourages the promotion of a change initiative, while moving away from current organizational practices. David, an executive decision maker from the OMHA, spoke to the influence of a champion for change as he explained, “if you have someone who is kind of passionate and championing a program, they will get it going and moving along well.” David, further deliberated the important role of a champion within an association facing change as he said, “If the coach could explain it or have someone that they could, you know, here is why we are doing it but maybe you can talk to the program convenor or champion...they could explain why they were doing it.”

Other participants supported a similar notion regarding the presence of a change champion within their respective minor hockey organizations. Coach Bob of the WMHA, shared a similar sentiment, “Yes. 100%. And ultimately you’re going to have a select few individuals that are running the show for getting this implemented. Because you’re going to have to have those people that want to make those changes.” Additionally, Todd, a coach and board member with the EMHA, added to the importance of establishing champions of change as he discussed his own experience, identifying himself as a champion, by implementing a cross-ice program within the EMHA:

In the second year we did the cross-ice, because I sort of drove the communication, let’s go we have to do this, and we’ve done it. So, this year at the board, I let them know we are doing the cross-ice game, they are fully supportive of it, there was no opposition. It’s not so much of getting approvals or blessings, it’s actually taking the bull by the horns and doing it.

Although participants discussed the concept of individuals representing change champions, study participants also acknowledged organizations or governing bodies having the power to provoke change and having influence as a champion. Board member and coach with the EMHA, Todd, spoke to this concept as he noted, “I would like to see Hockey Canada, OMHA, run a campaign about the game, take a more structured approach.” He continued as he discussed the potential change of implementing cross-ice hockey in minor hockey associations and the need for governing organizations to take action:

That’s why cross-ice is the way, Hockey Canada needs to put into rule that you will play cross-ice from you know 4 to even 7 or 8 years old, and I am a firm believer in that...I think OMHA needs to basically dictate, no, you will do cross-ice. Some people don’t have that, some people just want their kids to have fun and do something on the weekend, I get that, but you can do that and still learn and better yourself as a player.

**Formalizing change.** In an attempt to move forward with change, participants outlined the need to formalize the change process. In this case, participants in minor hockey organizations agreed that creating a consistent legacy, while formalizing the program and its operations, would help establish potential change initiatives. Executive decision maker, David, of the OMHA outlined the challenges in formalizing change due to the nature of volunteer involvement with minor hockey:

In a lot of cases, these are parents and they are moving up with their son or daughter so now they are out of that program. So, now what’s the legacy of that program? Does it have a life; does it live on after them...so that is a big challenge,

and that again, that is the nature of I think, minor sports, which depend on volunteers so much. It's that constant, people are leaving and new people are coming in.

In support, the challenges in creating a formalized and constant program legacy in minor hockey organizations were further solidified by board member and coach, Todd, of the EMHA, as he explained his past and future role within the organization:

Next year, my son will be moving up to the Novice program so I will assume a different position on the board, whatever that is, I will still be with it... You need succession planning, like who is taking Timbits over next year? It's not my problem I don't care, I'm being selfish here but I don't care, here you go, this is how it's being done, I'm showing you that it works, what's next? Let someone else do it.

Todd continued to discuss the need for formalization as he also suggested the presence of greater organizations in formalizing change initiatives. As he explained, associations and their programming are congruent with those running the program at that time. While using cross-ice as a program example, Todd proposed, "In terms of succession planning, if you will, or consistency in an organization, if you took that power out of their hands and the OMHA says you have to do cross-ice, I think you will have more success." In this instance, participants acknowledge the growing need to formalize change in order to create a successful and lasting legacy within a program:

That's where we want to create kind of legacy. So, the new people come in and here is the structure, but it doesn't always work that way, so now every year,

sometimes it feels like Groundhog Day, you are starting over again. (*David, Executive Decision Maker, OMHA*)

**Leveraging the successes of other organizations.** The final response from participants regarding the idea of disrupting institutional practices involves the influence of outside organizations within a hockey environment. To expand, interview participants often discussed the successes of USA Hockey in references to their nationwide implementation of a cross-ice program. David, an executive decision maker with the OMHA noted, “USA Hockey has done a great job of promoting that and now our challenge is to do the same.” Similarly, Ryan, another executive decision maker with the OMHA contributed the following:

You will see USA Hockey has mandated it and they are having some good success because they believe that is important in their delivery in the program and it is going to retain players and it is going to get those introductory players to stay in the game longer.

As participants discussed the success of opposing national organizations, it was acknowledged that these triumphs had an influence on the potential of change within their own organizations. This idea was further identified by OMHA executive decision maker, Ryan:

The success stories are things that we also have to do a good job of promoting because when an association does a good job of it and we promote that to our peers, other organizations are going to look at it as a viable option.

The effect of potential change from outside organizations was also acknowledged at the community sport level. First, WMHA board member Robert, credited other Ontario

associations and their successes implementing change initiatives, like cross-ice hockey, as he stated, “Kitchener is doing it and they are having tremendous success doing it.” Additionally, another board member from the WMHA supported a similar outlook on the influence and successes outside organizations had on prompting one’s own potential change process:

I guess if they do mandate it or they do bring it down, give us some associations we can contact, how is it working for them, what are their feelings on it, what would they do different? If they are the ones already doing it, they are the ones we want to talk to, right? If we’re going to do it, we don’t know what they are talking about when it comes to stuff like that. If there are people working on it already let us pick their brains, see what they are doing. (*Andy, Board Member, WMHA*)

## **Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to develop a better understanding of the pressures facing minor hockey associations, the reasons why they believe those pressures might lead to a consideration of change, the mechanisms that sustain the status quo despite being faced with pressures, and factors that could enable change. Generally, the findings provided insight into each of these previously unanswered questions. Based on the findings of this study, Figure 4 represents a revised model titled *A Staged Model of Organizational Change in Sport*. To identify potential contributions to the literature, I discuss the findings of the current study in relation to the model presented by Legg et al. (2016) and highlight the contributions of the present study.

Political, functional, and social pressures supported the deinstitutionalization process within the minor hockey organizations under investigation (Oliver, 1992). From



an association standpoint, both provincial and local hockey organizations discussed the presence of political pressures through the decline in enrollment, as well as a constant struggle to find new ways to attract and retain participants. As registration numbers declined within these organizations, the results revealed major gaps in participant skill levels. In this instance, participants often took issue with the performance of their respective organizations and its lack of participant numbers, acknowledging the need to innovate and grow in order to create better experiences for their participants (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). Pressures in the way of cost and an organization's inability to provide the best opportunity for participants to play were also identified as a functional pressure for change (Legg et al., 2016). Study participants noted affordability and the high cost to play hockey as a hindrance to participation, thus revealing the functional organizational pressure to attain specific goals of creating more inclusive opportunities and making participation more affordable (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992). Additionally, a shift in the diversity of participants and their families was considered a social pressure facing minor hockey organizations. Associations, including both the WHMA and the EMHA, described a shift in demographics and the influx of non-traditional hockey families enrolling in their organizations. As such, participants noted that past practices to ensure proper reach and scope of their programs may no longer be socially viable. In response to the shift in diversity of potential minor hockey participants, organizations were left questioning past traditional practices and the need to adjust current approaches (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). As minor hockey associations experienced substantial pressures to change, the findings revealed whether organizations perceived a pressure to be worthy of their attention and

resources. The order of the importance regarding these pressures to change may be unclear and will be dependent on the respective organization.

Not all pressures in an organization's environment will result in a perceived pressure by the organization. However, it has been rather unclear in the sport management literature as to the circumstances in which an organization would perceive a pressure to be worthy of attention and resources. This study found that minor hockey associations cared about pressures when they related to their organizational values, when they realized they needed to improve on the issue related to the pressure, and when the benefits outweighed the costs to the organization. This contribution further extends Legg et al.'s (2016) model by identifying some of the mechanisms that might explain progression from the pressures stage to action. Although organizations may vary in makeup and operation, the understanding, significance, and potential implementation of change may also drastically differ (Legg et al., 2016). As such, before an entity feels comfortable in moving forward with change initiatives, the factors that will make an organization care about a pressure need identification.

As values within organizations represent a component of current organizational templates (Frontiera, 2010; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), it also may be important to clarify the term 'organizational template' used in Legg et al.'s (2016) model. That is, the change may be to current practices but not always to the organization's values (Amis et al., 2002, 2004). Perhaps, 'existing organizational practice' would be a better term. For instance, the organizations within the study outlined the values of inclusivity, positive participant experience, participant enjoyment, and skill development as being important.

Therefore, the value themselves might not change, but rather the practice that leads to the fulfilment of the value may change.

As minor hockey associations acknowledged the organizational importance of pressures for change, study participants outlined two distinct responses: institutional maintenance and institutional disruption. Institutional maintenance was evidenced through organizational responses to important pressures by supporting the continuation of organization practices that are often associated with the status quo (Dowling & Smith, 2016; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). The mechanisms that sustain the status quo were not previously identified in the *Integrated Model of Organizational Change* (Cunningham, 2002; Legg et al., 2016). In the present study, the mechanisms that sustain the current format of hockey included values and history, constrained resources, operational challenges, and influential stakeholders. Participants discussed fighting with traditional hockey history and what programs should look like, generational differences that created challenges in initiating change, a need for an appropriate capacity for action in order to move forward with change, the importance of having the necessary resources and ice time for change (Soparnot, 2011), as well as the ability, expertise, and human resources power to succeed with the potential new objectives (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). As such, organizations often showed strong commitments to existing practices (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). As suggested by Welty Peachey et al. (2011), power within an organization was not limited to the influence of one person, rather, participants noted the challenges with parents, the opinions of board members, and the outcomes for players, as the stakeholders that have a major influence on potential change initiatives.

In opposition of continuing organizational practices and institutional maintenance, study participants supported the notion of disrupting institutions by outlining the necessary factors, as well as opportunities, necessary in reaching potential and sustainable change initiatives in minor hockey. As identified in the work of Legg et al. (2016) and other relevant literature, findings revealed the importance of communication throughout the change process in order to disrupt institutions (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Washington & Hacker, 2005; Welty Peachey et al., 2011). However, the findings of the present study suggest that the term communication may not be specific enough and does not capture the full range of disruption practices needed to garner acceptance of change. Specifically, the present study found that educating, selling, leading, and championing were necessary to move forward. To elaborate, communication in the form of educating stakeholders was one example provided by participants in support of disrupting current institutional practices. Study participants acknowledged that change may be well-received if stakeholders are properly prepared and educated in order to appreciate the benefits of change initiatives (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016). As well, participants suggested a more top-down approach should be taken to educating stakeholders. The importance of an organization's ability and strategies to educate its stakeholders were identified by participants as this attention to communicating and education would allow stakeholders to be more receptive, while further creating clear and controlled messages to aid in understanding change (Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2011). Similarly, communication was a necessary component of selling change. Participants again discussed the importance of communicating well as a central aspect to

establishing support, stakeholder buy-in, and better understanding for potential change initiatives in order to reduce resistance (Washington & Hacker, 2005).

As previously noted, the model presented by Legg et al. (2016) did not explicitly identify the role that important individuals or organizations had on the deinstitutionalization process. Sensitized by the concept of institutional work (Dowling & Smith, 2016; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), the findings from the present study highlighted such significant actors in a minor hockey context. Specifically, parents were one type of actor influencing pressures for change (Lawrence et al., 2011). Minor hockey organizations and their stakeholders indicated that because parents contribute their time and money to putting their kids into programs, their expectations for the programs being offered by associations are high, which often results in pressures for change to meet these expectations. Additionally, this study showed how influential and powerful organizations create pressures for change (Lawrence et al., 2011). For instance, the OMHA often recognized the guidance and power that greater organizations like Hockey Canada had on creating pressures for change, while also recognizing and striving for similar program successes attained by outside organizations like USA Hockey. Local organizations such as the WMHA and the EMHA also identified the importance of being aware and keeping pace with the practices of other local centres, and as such, influencing potential responses for pressures for change within their respective organizations. In sum, these findings help contribute to the concept of institutional work within a youth sport context, by identifying the influence that actors, or a collective of actors, had on the pressures affecting the need for change and the potential disruption of current organizational practices (Lawrence et al., 2011).

The importance of individual leaders in the change process was also identified in this study. This identification represents a potential addition to the integrative model of organizational change by identifying change leaders as a rate-moderating factor affecting the chances of implementing change (Cunningham, 2002; Legg et al., 2016). Study participants described strong feelings towards the importance of a change champion and the role that individuals or organizations may have in leading, encouraging, and showing willingness to change (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Howell & Shea, 2006). In sum, findings showed that to successfully establish and sustain change initiatives, study participants felt a strong need for someone who is passionate about advocating a change initiative (e.g., cross-ice play) (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). In championing potential change, organizations felt individuals who advocated such change could help further establish and sustain potential change initiatives, playing an imperative role in moving away from previously established organizational templates (Danylchuk et al., 2015). As well, participants referenced the idea that organizations or associations may also be a champion of change (Lawrence et al., 2011). In reference to the potential program modifications like cross-ice hockey, organizations or governing bodies were recognized as having the power to influence and provoke change as a champion and often, called for the guidance of Hockey Canada or governing bodies like the OMHA to support and lead change initiatives. Similarly, participants also spoke about the value of having new leadership to bring about new ideas and a more open-minded approach to change.

When change progresses past the acceptance stage, there are a number of implementation moderating factors that can slow down the transition to full implementation and enduring use of the new practice. The present study adds to Legg et

al's (2016) findings by including 'formalization' in the list of such factors. Specifically, participants identified formalization as a way of addressing a constraint within youth sport, namely, a high turnover rate of volunteers. In this study, potential change initiatives were highly favoured and supported if stakeholders noted a possibility of a consistent legacy through formalization of the change within its programs and operations. In sum, when initiating potential disruption within an institution, participants believed that changes could be met with less resistance if a clear formalized succession plan was in place that created a legacy for program structures and operations that can easily be adapted by new volunteers and staff.

Overall, future research presents the opportunity to further develop the concepts of organizational change as discussed in the current study. In one instance, future researchers may look to expand the scope of the organizations studied, looking beyond Ontario and the Windsor-Essex region, in order to encompass a greater voice and understanding of minor hockey associations in Canada.

### **Implications**

Through an in-depth analysis of the findings and relevant literature, the current investigation can suggest numerous managerial implications for practice for organizations in discussing and establishing potential change initiatives in youth sport. First, individuals seeking change need to be aware of when an organization will perceive a pressure to be worthy of attention. In this study, specific factors were identified that explained why the organization cared about certain pressures. Thus, individuals seeking change should consider those factors when attempting to sell the need for change. Second, organizations need to advance the change by limiting resistance (Legg et al.,

2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2011). For instance, participants anticipated resistance to the pressures of potential change through a deference to tradition, the negative influences of certain stakeholders, and limited resources and organizational capacity. In response, organizations need to involve and solicit stakeholder (i.e., board members, coaches, parents, players) feedback throughout the change process (Amis et al., 2004; Legg et al., 2016). One suggestion of improving stakeholder involvement in order to limit resistance is a strong focus on educating and communicating key change initiatives. As discussed by participants, change may be well-received if stakeholders are properly prepared, educated, and fully understand or appreciate the benefits of change initiatives (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016).

Third, as organizations push for or acknowledge the need for potential change, the role and presence of a change champion is essential. As findings showed, in order to move forward with change initiatives, it is imperative to have someone to be able to take charge, be passionate about advocating a program as well as having the desire to generate such change. The need for a change champion within organizational change can also be directed to a collective of champions or organizations, such as Hockey Canada or the OMHA in this instance, as they hold both power and influence in strategically approaching, supporting, and leading potential change initiatives. Last, in order to sustain the change, organizations should formalize new initiatives through policies and program design mandates.

## **Conclusion**

By examining a potential change in the way minor hockey is played in Ontario, the purpose of the current study was to develop a better understanding of the transition



and sustainability of organizational change in a youth sport context. Through interviews of stakeholders in both provincial governing bodies and local minor hockey associations, the researcher was able to develop an improved knowledge of the pressures facing minor hockey organizations to change, the importance of the pressures specific to those organizations, as well as the organizational responses to these pressures pushing for potential change. In sum, the current study gives context to youth sport organizations contemplating potential change, while outlining the challenges, hesitations, and successful practices needed to initiate and sustain organizational change.

The contributions of this study support and enhance literature of organizational theory and change through the influence and focus of the concepts of institutional work and as an extension of Legg et al.'s (2016) modified version of the *Integrative Model of Organizational Change*. In essence, by identifying the influence that actors, or a collective of actors, had on the pressures affecting the need for change (Lawrence et al., 2011), the contributions of the concepts of institutional work may enhance the examined model presented by Legg et al. (2016) in creating a more holistic and inclusive attempt at studying change, as the perspectives and experiences of those involved within an organization are often overlooked (Lawrence et al., 2011). Future research may expand the scope of organizational theory by further examining these concepts in order to enhance and understand the process of organizational change.

Furthermore, this research can help stakeholders and organizations understand the challenges and intricacies of the change process prior to implementation. Managers and organizations need to continue to recognize the specificity of resistance within organizations, encourage initiative and support of a change champion, while continually

adopting a strategic plan to formalize and sustain change. To conclude, organizations may be better prepared to face resistance from potential change by establishing pre-emptive strategies for better implementation of future potential change initiatives.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Theoretical Framework**

Within sport, change is inevitable. To meet the demands of both external and internal pressures in an athletics environment, sport organizations are continuously reforming and restructuring policies, procedures, culture and leadership within organizations (Slack & Parent, 2006; Welty Peachey et al., 2011). In order to conceptualize the process of change, Cunningham (2002), proposed the *Integrative Model of Organizational Change* based on institutional theory, population ecology, strategic choice, and resource dependence, as factors that identify the influencing aspects of the development and success of change from one template to another. Subsequently, based on an empirical study, Legg et al., (2016) presented a modified version of the original model that proposed the implementation of a communication stage, the possibility of acceptance or rejection in the change process, and identified additional factors that affect the change process. Furthermore, to illustrate the changes identified within minor hockey organizations in Canada, and the use of cross-ice structural reforms as a suggested new template, the modified integrative model of organizational change proposed by Legg et al. (2016) will serve as the sensitizing theoretical framework. The remainder of this section describes the model.

### **Organizational Template**

The organizational template is considered the current initiatives and processes being deployed within an organization, representing the values that hold an organization together, as well as the concepts of meaning and understanding of the culture and practices the organization has in place (Frontiera, 2010). This structure and regularized



behaviours are the results of ideas, values, and attitudes that are held by an organization and its members (Frontiera, 2010; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). As outlined by Greenwood and Hinings (1996), the concept of institutional theory is “not usually regarded as a theory of organizational change, but as usually an explanation of the similarity and stability of organizational arrangements in a given population or field of organizations” (p. 1023). Within similar fields, organizations often develop a sense of isomorphism, where their behaviours and common practices tend to mimic what other organizations have done and found to be successful (Danylchuk, Snelgrove, & Wood, 2015; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). The central idea of organizations moving towards isomorphic practices can be rooted from environmental pressures that produce the need for organizations to adopt similar practices in order to gain legitimacy by becoming more institutionalized with its surrounding environment (Washington & Patterson, 2011). For example, research has found that isomorphism in the form of civil service reforms offered in cities can be embraced with the hope of becoming more socially legitimate as a society (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; Washington & Patterson, 2011). Alternatively, in a sport context, in order to continue funding that was received, isomorphic pressures from the Sport Canada and the Canadian Federal Government were instilled on NSOs to become more highly structured and bureaucratic by design (Slack & Hinings, 1994; Washington & Patterson, 2011). According to Welty Peachey and Bruening (2011), as well as Washington (2004), a move towards isomorphism often yields standardization in operations, producing a trend described as an “iron cage,” where “organizational change occurs as a process that makes organizations more similar and not necessarily more efficient or successful” (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011, p. 203).

One limitation of the organization change model presented by Cunningham (2002) and Legg et al. (2016) is the lack of recognition of other practices at play that are influential in the continued adoption of the status quo. For example, the concept of *institutional work* may be instructive in addition to isomorphism. Such a perspective recognizes the importance of individual actors and organizations in sustaining institutional practices (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Such recognition is important as Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca (2011) noted that, often, organizations and “large-scale social and economic changes” (p. 52) are at the forefront of institutional studies. While in opposition, the perspectives and experiences of individuals who have been involved within an organization and its structure are often overlooked. The concept of institutional work is defined as “the practices of individual and collective actors aimed at creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence et al., 2011, p. 52). In regards to creating institutions, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), as well as Dowling and Smith (2016), defined institutional work as actors engaged in the actions that build, develop and produce institutions. This is followed by institutional maintenance which can be defined as “the reproduction and continuation of institutional practices such as rules and regulations” (Dowling & Smith, 2016, p. 7) that are associated with everyday taken-for-granted practices present within an organization (Dowling & Smith, 2016; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Finally, disrupting institutions involves moving away from previous practices or norms within an organization (Dowling & Smith, 2016; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

To expand on this concept, an example of institutional work can be identified in the research of Dowling and Smith (2016), where the continued practice and presence of

the Canadian high performance sport program, Own the Podium (OTP), was supported by a continuing process of institutional work. To expand, as the importance of individual and collective actors shaped the institution, organizational practices helped, “institutionalized OTP and the norms, routines and practices associated with high performance sport” (p. 1). The idea of institutional work highlights that actors, or a collective of actors, can influence the practices and norms associated with an organization’s current template, while also affecting the need for change and disruption of these current practices (Lawrence et al., 2011).

An organization may move away from its current template towards a new organizational template as a result of a number of factors (Danylchuk, et al., 2015). This process is known as deinstitutionalization.

### **Deinstitutionalization**

Often, organizations tend to change their structures in order to conform to their institutional environments and the expectations defined as the prescribed ways to organize (Slack, 1997). The process of deinstitutionalization becomes prominent when there is a change in the organization’s environment leaving once institutionalized ideas altered, exposing the organization to positions from other sectors with the possibility of change (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). To expand, Welty Peachey and Bruening (2011) identified an example of deinstitutionalization as they found that the hiring of a new athletic director in a Division I Football Championship Subdivision athletic department was considered an environmental pressure on the organization. They further described this example of deinstitutionalization as they noted that “bringing in new ideas that led to a new

philosophy, which fostered the deinstitutionalism of the previous philosophy” (p. 215).

As first acknowledged by Oliver (1992), and within the modified model of organizational change presented by Legg et al. (2016), political, functional, and social pressures from both inside and outside of an organization are ultimately considered the major components that affect deinstitutionalization and its processes.

**Political pressures.** Political pressures refer to the practices within an organization and the legitimacy of these operations (Danylchuk, et al., 2015). These political pressures often mount when the performance of an organization becomes a concern, members of the organization begin to take issue with the existing state of the organization, the growing need to innovate and evolve becomes prominent, and finally, the external environments and external organizations become less reliable (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). For example, while examining the jurisdiction and professional business services of accounting firms in Alberta, Canada from 1977 to 1997, Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings (2002) outlined the political pressures that influenced major change to the function of several organizations. Research showed that the larger firms were influential actors as they first changed from purely accounting services to multi-disciplinary accounting and business practices (Greenwood et al., 2002). In response, governing organizations like the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta urged the adoption of these new legitimate practices, leaving smaller firms within the field to evolve and adapt to new standards in order to meet performances and innovations within this landscape (Greenwood et al., 2002). As the market and environment changed, pressures forced accounting associations to adjust in order to legitimize operations (Greenwood et al., 2002). Likewise, within

sport, political pressures were outlined in research conducted by Danylchuk et al. (2015) that examined the status of women's participation in golf. In response to political pressures, the format of a women's golf league was altered to create a wider appeal in comparison to the previous design. The researchers found that the focal golf club needed to maintain membership numbers by pleasing as many female participants as possible, and was forced to innovate and change as a response to the declining nationwide numbers in women's golf participation (Danylchuk, et al., 2015).

**Functional pressures.** The second factor contributing to deinstitutionalization is functional pressures. Cunningham (2002), noted that functional pressures occur when “questions arise concerning the efficacy of technical functions of the firm, which in turn, ultimately come back to concerns related to performance” (p. 280). Similarly, Legg et al. (2016) identified functional pressures as an influence on “an organization's desire to provide the best product or service possible and this desire can lead to change occurring” (p. 7). Functional pressures can initiate change in multiple ways. Oliver (1992) found that change occurs through these pressures when organizations and their goals become more specific in nature, when changes to economic environments become more useful or beneficial to the organization, when the competition for resources within an organizational field increases, and, when the emergence of new information, data, and technology can lead to change (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992).

For example, while examining the evolution of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Washington (2004) identified functional pressures facing the organization. As detailed in his study, the NCAA became the ultimate powerhouse in American intercollegiate sport by expanding its broader goals and membership to include

smaller, less prestigious schools in order to combat the competition for resources and rising status of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (Washington, 2004). From an alternative perspective, Brock (2006) found that within the scope of health care, functional pressures such as innovations and technological advancements have drastically changed the concept of inpatient hospital care. With the developments in minimally invasive surgical procedures, there is less of a need for patient care within a hospital setting, as the trauma associated with such methods has been significantly reduced (Brock, 2006). These advancements have also created the possibility of procedures to be administered by other capable health care professionals outside of a hospital setting (Brock, 2006). As such, functional pressures such as these often create competitive and strategic threats leading to deinstitutionalization in various professional organizations (Brock, 2006).

**Social pressures.** Social pressures also influence deinstitutionalization by influencing whether an organization proceeds with its traditional or past practices, or abandons these methods for different and contemporary institutional approaches (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). By definition, social pressures include division or disintegration within an organization, disruption of past historical or traditional approaches of an entity, changes to laws, regulations or institutional rules within a field, as well as, a breakdown in the structure and configuration of the organization (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). For instance, Frontiera (2010) illustrates the social pressures within professional sport organizations and their approach to change as he studied six high ranked team officials (owners or general managers) who had successfully brought their organizations through

organizational change. Embodied by a team's poor performance and a divide in culture resulting in social pressures within, the disintegration in one organization, resulted in a call for leadership to move away from past or traditional practices (Frontiera, 2010).

Washington and Hacker (2005), also outlined social pressures in an examination of the country of Botswana, Africa and their created government initiative, Vision 2016. Social pressures affecting the governing entity of Botswana aided in the creation of changes to the structure and role of the organization to “improve the quality of the services that they deliver in their governmental department” (Washington & Hacker, 2005, p. 403). Researchers found that with a reconfiguration and improvement of understanding from a department perspective, change and goals of Vision 2016 were met with less resistance (Washington & Hacker, 2005).

Overall, political, functional, and social pressures from both inside and outside of an organization's environment can have significant influences on a push for organizational change and the deinstitutionalization of traditional practices (Legg et al., 2016). In accordance with the work of Oliver (1992) and Cunningham (2002), the pressures involved in the process of deinstitutionalization help facilitate the change between the original template in place within an organization and a move towards an alternative or the creation of a new template, as illustrated in the integrative model of organizational change offered by Legg et al. (2016). However, not reflected in this model is recognition of the role that individuals or key organizations play in influencing deinstitutionalization. The concept of institutional work and its focus on identifying key actors involved in disrupting practices may be helpful in addressing this limitation (Dowling & Smith, 2016; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

Once an organization has decided upon change, it is important to effectively communicate change in order to alleviate resistance and successfully transition to a new template (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2011).

### **Communicating to Stakeholders**

Throughout relevant literature, the importance of communication during the change processes is evident (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016; Washington & Hacker, 2005; Welty Peachy et al., 2011). As proposed by Legg et al. (2016), a communication stage was added to Cunningham's (2002) model of organizational change in order to "convey the importance of this step in the change process" (p. 28). Often, within discussions of institutional change, communication is neglected or moved to the background, as it is assumed that the process of communicating change is a straightforward procedure, allowing individuals to receive and send relevant information (Cornelissen, Durand, Fiss, Lammers, & Vaara, 2015). In reality, misunderstanding and confusion are often created during organizational change when information is not clearly or consistently delivered to all stakeholders (Legg et al., 2016). As a result of failed communication, attempted change is frequently met by resistance. However, by communicating effectively during the change process, leaders within these entities have the ability to control the flow of information, while being transparent with their intentions (Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2011).

As noted by Washington and Hacker (2005), the understanding of the reasons for change and implementation plans can help reduce resistance. Outlined by Legg et al. (2016), formal communication and informal communication represent essential aspects of communicating change to stakeholders of an organization. Formal communication



represents exchanging information officially, where the communication and knowledge can be controlled, and organizations have the ability to “select channels, spokespersons, timing, venues, or forums of interaction” (Lewis, 2007, p. 187) for particular communication strategies. In comparison, informal communication allows for information to be shared through different avenues without organizational control. Informal communication is considered less desirable from an organizational standpoint, due to the prospect of inconsistent or incorrect interpretation of messaging by stakeholders (Legg et al., 2016). It is imperative for organizations to clearly and adequately communicate to its stakeholders during organizational change, as individuals may interpret or receive information differently than others (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016). As change is implemented, concise communication and recognition can reduce resistance from key stakeholders.

For example, the importance of communicating change to stakeholders was identified by Legg et al. (2016) as a factor that would have benefited the change process of the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA), a youth soccer organization in Ontario, Canada. In this instance, participants felt that there was minimal communication of the benefits and structural changes of the OSA, as the organization was dependent on a long chain of informal communication as a way of reaching multiple stakeholders (Legg et al., 2016). As a result, stakeholders, such as coaches and parents, typically received crucial change-related information through ‘the grapevine,’ rather than from credible official sources or literature (Legg et al., 2016). Thus, individuals interpreted and fashioned their opinions or provisions regarding the changes based on their personal understandings, whether negative or positive (Legg et al., 2016). In sum, Legg et al. (2016) noted that a

more direct line of communication as simple as e-mails to the stakeholders can help control information and help assist in the implementation and transition of change.

### **Rate Moderating Factors**

In contrast to the pressures that initiate change, there are a number of factors that can affect the change process and hinder or expedite the changes being implemented (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992). In regards to the integrative model of organizational change proposed by Legg et al. (2016), these factors include inertia, entropy and ambivalence. In addition to these key factors, organizational change literature often highlights the importance of individual leaders or actors who can affect the change process in both positive and negative ways. Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) argued that leaders' change-related actions are one of the most repeatedly acknowledged drivers of change and can often result in its success or failure. As such, the role of individual leaders within organizational change and its process can be identified as an additional rate moderating factor affecting the transition and movement to the next stages of the change process.

**Inertia.** Studies have noted the importance of inertia, entropy and ambivalence as aspects that influence organizational change (e.g., Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). Inertia refers to “persistent organizational resistance to changing architecture” (Hannan, Pólos, & Carroll, 2004, p. 214), or the aspects within an organization that constrain or erode change (Legg et al., 2016; Oliver, 1992). To expand, lack of support from within the organization, strong commitments to previous embedded practices, and personal opinions or lack of awareness are examples of ways inertia can impede and or slow down change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Dissatisfaction from

stakeholders or those involved in an organizational setting plays a substantial role in the development of inertia and the response to change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Furthermore, Greenwood and Hinings (1996) detailed dissatisfaction in the accounting profession as they acknowledged that this concept could vary from firm to firm. In some instances, the proposition of, or the differences in, operating practices such as management consulting or the proportion of partners to total members employed, may effect different levels of dissatisfaction leading to the pressures of inertia. In contrast, Greenwood and Hinings (1996) also outlined an important concept in limiting inertia within an organization as they noted the significance of understanding the various responses to the pressures of change. To expand, as an organization, it may be advantageous to examine the successful adoption and diffusion of implemented change and its process, rather than resistance and inertia, in order to gain a stronger competitive edge and a proactive approach when facing pressures (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Conversely, crisis within an organization is one such example that can break through inertia (Skirstad, 2009). As noted by Legg et al. (2016), “regardless of the source of resistance, inertia is likely to occur at some point throughout the change process due to the frame breaking nature of radical change” (p. 9).

**Entropy.** Entropy in organizations refers to a natural or expected change (Oliver, 1992). Organizational entropy is thought to speed up or help advance the change process (Cunningham, 2002). Often, entropy in organizations consists of change where minimal support for reform is needed and the organizational practices subjected to change frequently go unnoticed or are “taken-for-granted” (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Oliver, 1992). In this instance, entropy is congruent with support from within an organization.

The more the change is supported, or the more commitment seen from groups within an organization, the ease and speed at which changes can occur and be sustained (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). In response, strategic management and a systematic approach to change can help create support for change within organizations (Danylchuk et al., 2015). For example, Danylchuk et al. (2015) noted the importance of support in relation to change as the concept of entropy can be found within their study of women's participation in golf. In order to successfully implement changes regarding a new format within a women's golf league, influential women were used in order to act as internal change agents that helped create support and commitment for the initiatives being proposed (Danylchuk et al., 2015). For this reason, a smoother transition and marginal resistance to the new format were created (Danylchuk et al., 2015). In sum, entropy can be viewed from a stronger perspective once an organizational change has been made, making for a difficult analysis during the change process (Danylchuk et al., 2015).

**Ambivalence.** Ambivalence is the third aspect that may have an effect on the change process. Ambivalence is defined as having inconsistent, uncertain, or mixed thoughts, feelings or actions to circumstances of change, indifference in opinion, or moving away from the traditional aspects of either a positive or negative position towards decisions (Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). As argued by Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012), ambivalence gives opportunity to create an encompassing outlook on the attitudes that impact organizational change and could be beneficial to include within theoretical frameworks in order to evolve organizational theory. The idea of indifference or ambivalence is often overlooked or undervalued as a response to

change, as this uncertainty could be considered the most prominent response for individuals (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). In many cases, it may be difficult for individuals to immediately form an opinion or decide whether to reject or accept change within an organization (Piderit, 2000; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). Fineman (2006) indicated that responses to change can vary extensively, and that numerous feelings can be present towards the changes being made, not simply just positive or negative. As identified by Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012), factors including “intrapersonal conflict, perceived lack of institutional support, managerial turnover, and previous negative experience with change” (p. 179) can lead to ambivalence as a reaction to the change process.

Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012) outlined an example of ambivalence from an intercollegiate athletic department perspective. They noted that an employee may see the department’s choice of discontinuing a sport due to budgetary reasons as a potential solution to solving financial problems, but may also recognize the consequences on the “program, student-athletes and other constituencies have not yet been thoroughly considered” (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012, p. 173), and may be hesitant to fully support the change. As such, the values of each individual can play a significant role in the emergence of ambivalence as an individual with opposing values may feel uncertain towards change that represents a new value system being implemented (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). In sum, the presence of ambivalence as a factor influencing change is a predominant factor that should not be overlooked. Therefore, the concept of ambivalence was included in Legg et al.’s (2016) modified integrative model of organizational change as a rate-moderating factor that affects organizational change.

**Individual leaders.** Individual leaders, often referred to as champions of change, are recognized and respected members of an organization that can play a significant role in the change process (Chrusceil, 2008). Change champions can be identified as those who promote improvement and show encouragement towards “enthusiasm and confidence about the success of the innovation,” as well as those who “get the right people involved and persist under adversity” (Howell & Shea, 2006, p. 181). As outlined by Danylchuk et al. (2015), the individual acts of leadership within an organization are imperative as they are considered an influential part in developing a sense of willingness to change and an ability to move away from previously established templates within an organization. Similarly, Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) expand on this concept by stating that, although a leader’s action, as a result of their power and authority within an organization, can be viewed as an influencing aspect of change, it is clear that a stronger transition and reception toward change can occur. For instance, when those within an organization visibly see authority figures who are committed to the proposed initiatives and are actively involved in interacting with employees throughout the change process, support for potential change can be advanced. Leaders must “walk the talk” in order to create an accepting environment within their respective organizations that are prepared for change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010).

Furthermore, Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) found research has revealed that leaders can maintain momentum in introducing change in numerous ways. These actions include “paying attention to the progress of the change initiative, removing obstacles encountered, developing appropriate structures and establishing necessary monitoring mechanisms, as well as communicating the relationship between the change

efforts and organizational success” (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010, p. 183). In sum, leaders play a key role in influencing and maintaining change initiatives.

In contrast to the importance of leadership within the change process, the style of leadership exemplified by change champions is regarded as an additional influencing factor presented by leaders in relation to organizational change. To expand, Slack and Hinings (1992) highlighted the findings of several researchers that identify the prominence of a transformational leadership style and its significance to individuals in the change process. Transformational leadership can be noted as being visionary in nature as it appeals to the higher needs of employees of feeling valued while associated with a supporting and maximizing the full potential of those within an organization (Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996; Welty Peachey et al., 2011). Slack and Hinings (1992) noted that leaders who possess a transformational style of leadership are able to generate commitment and normalize change in organizations. In support of such claims, Slack and Hinings (1992) stated:

Transformational leaders create and communicate a need for change within their organization; they overcome technical, political, and cultural resistance to change; they make personal commitments and sacrifices for change; and they articulate visions that provide a sense of direction and principles for the change process. (p. 117)

In combination, research presented by Caza (2000) also identified leadership style as a central element affecting proposed changes made to the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA). Consistent with the concept of transformational leadership, proposed changes within the ABA failed as individuals such as the President and Chief Official did not

support a transformational approach and viewed the initiatives as being best for the ABA without regard for others feelings, values, or opinions regarding change (Caza, 2000).

### **Acceptance or Rejection of Template**

As previously stated, Legg et al. (2016) proposed the implementation of a communication stage, as well as the possibility of acceptance or rejection in the change process. As such, rejection of change marks resistance from stakeholders of an organization and/or lack of commitment towards a new template. Ford, Ford, and D'Amelio (2008) identified resistance to change as not just a negative input but also a positive contribution to change, allowing for modifications to be made that can help “build awareness and momentum for change, and eliminating unnecessary, impractical, or counterproductive elements in the design or conduct of the change process” (p. 363). As ambivalence can be noted as an additional critical response to change (Legg et al., 2016; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012), Legg et al. (2016) suggested that the possibility of either accepting or rejecting the implemented change, and if change is rejected, the organization and its stakeholders can revert back to the original organizational template or modify the proposed new changes, by returning to the creation of a new template stage.

Conversely, acceptance of organizational change can take place for numerous reasons. For example, while researching women's participation in golf, Danylchuk et al. (2015) discovered that the acceptance of the changes made to the league's formatting were welcomed due to the support of fun, sociability, inclusivity, and flexibility within the alterations and throughout the change process. Equally, Legg et al. (2016) mentioned that control over available information, education or support for new environments, and



inclusion of stakeholders in the decision making process aided in the acceptance of organizational changes being made to local youth soccer clubs in Ontario. Likewise, the concept of theorization may play a role in the acceptance of change as Greenwood et al. (2002) noted that simplifying and concisely presenting the advantages and results of new changes can help diffuse and create acceptance. As organizations and stakeholders begin to accept change, the move towards the recognition and application of a new organizational template becomes prominent.

### **Implementation Moderating Factors**

As the change process gains acceptance towards the new proposed template, multiple factors play an influential role in the pace at which an organization reaches the final stage of organizational change. These factors are considered implementation moderating factors, and consist of an organization's capacity for action, resources dependence, power dependency, and the existence of an available alternative (Cunningham, 2002; Danylchuk et al., 2015; Legg et al., 2016).

**Capacity for action.** Capacity for action signifies an organization's ability to initiate change, while managing the process of moving or changing from one template to another (Danylchuk et al., 2015; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Greenwood and Hinings (1996) noted that, in order for this process to occur, an organization needs to have a clear understanding of the direction in which it is heading, the ability and expertise to succeed with the new objective, and the capability to reach its organizational goals. Additionally, Soparnot (2011) supports similar concepts in relation to capacity for action as he identified the importance of having the necessary resources for change, a framework in which change will occur, as well as the knowledge to implement change. In relation to

change, the concept of capacity for action can be identified in the research of Casey, Payne, and Eime (2012), as they examined organizational readiness of state sport organizations in Australia. As noted by those authors, in order to contribute to public health objectives, state sport organizations were beginning to take on health promotion programs to complement already established sport and recreation agendas. In some cases, these changes were met with resistance, as the success of these changes was highly dependent on the readiness and capacity of each program (Casey et al., 2012). To expand, those organizations that were considered financially “well off” were able to adapt to these changes in a meaningful way, as most were not prepared to allocate funding to support health promotion as sport was considered more important to maintain for these organizations (Casey et al., 2012). Overall, in order for organizations to accept change, the need for or the capacity for action within an organization needs to be present. When paired with other influences, the capacity for action within an organization is considered one of a multitude of enabling factors that helps drive organizational change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

**Resource dependence.** Cunningham (2002) noted “competition for valuable resources plays a valuable role in the adoption of institutional norms” (p. 284). Resource dependence is considered an additional factor that influences organizational change as many youth sport organizations depend on their surrounding environments in order to be sustainable (Cunningham, 2002; Legg et al., 2016). Resource dependence can impact the opportunities available for change and an organization’s willingness to change, due to the level of dependency an organization has on outside organizations for essential resources (Cunningham, 2002; Danylchuk et al., 2015). As outside resources become scarce,

organizations become more at risk as they depart from “standard practice in their pursuit of alternative resources” (Sherer & Lee, 2002, p. 103). For example, in a study that observed Canadian amateur sport organizations over a 12-year period, Amis, Slack, and Hinings (2002) defined government involvement as “a commitment to viewing the federal government as a partner, with a role of supplying resources and expertise to national sport organizations (NSOs)” (p. 445). In their research, it was discovered that the changes suggested by Sport Canada, the governing body of sport in Canada, revealed that the federal government determined that elite-level sport performances were important and needed to be improved (Amis et al., 2002). This government initiative supported the need for NSOs to become more formalized in terms of “day-to-day operations controlled by professional staff rather than volunteers, as previously had been the norm” (Amis et al., 2002, p. 443). To successfully create and implement a change to the Canadian sport system, NSOs conformed to the suggested changes by Sports Canada in order to secure and continue receiving available resources from the superior governing body (Amis, et al., 2002). In sum, Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) highlighted the important influence resources have in regards to the survival of an organization throughout the change process by stating, “sustainable business requires an efficient and effective use of resources, especially in instances of large-scale change” (p. 189).

**Power dependency.** Welty Peachey and Bruening (2011) defined power in the context of change as “the ability of one party to bring about desired outcomes despite resistance” (p. 204). Without power, meaningful change within an organization is difficult to achieve (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Varying levels of influence on change is associated with power dependencies, as the more power a stakeholder(s) has, the more

influence it brings (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). Equally, as noted by Welty Peachey et al. (2011), the concept of power within an organization may be transformational in nature, as it may not be limited to the influence of one individual, but rather shared with employees and other stakeholders in the decision making process in order to create less resistance to change. In regards to change, power can be influential when key stakeholders support the concepts of change, but conversely, will be met with resistance due to lack of backing from those with authority (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). One such example can be found within the work of Amis et al. (2004) in regards to a group of NSOs experiencing radical change in order to become “more bureaucratic with operations controlled by professional staff with volunteers restricted to supporting roles” (p. 163). In one case, the powerful volunteer stakeholder group of one NSO supported the change, forfeiting their power, as volunteer decision makers felt that the professional team was competent and capable of leading the NSO (Amis et al., 2004). Conversely, a different NSO experiencing similar changes felt that their interests did not coincide with the perceived changes and the volunteer decision makers in power needed to protect their interests (Amis et al., 2004). This lead to resistance in an attempt to prevent the change to professional decision making within the organization (Amis et al., 2004). Although the concept of power dependency is an important factor in enabling various sequences of action (Amis et al., 2004), the alternative opportunities available in relation to change also plays a key role within the change process (Cunningham, 2002).

**Available alternative.** Available alternative refers to the different or new options available to organizations, excluding their current template, which may be a possibility

for change (Cunningham, 2002). Alternatives and alternative templates are often developed by dissatisfied groups within an organization and tend to respond to evolving directions and recommendations within an organization's environment (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Often, the status quo or original template can come into question or considered for change, creating corrosion within the organization (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). This lack of commitment towards the original organizational template in place can lead to an increased demand towards exploring an available alternative within a profession or organization (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). To expand, Greenwood and Hinings (1996) found the concept of an available alternative present within the accounting industry. In one instance, the researchers noted that management consultants throughout different accounting firms often became dissatisfied with the current organizational templates in use as they lacked both financial and social reward for individual efforts that produced "greater shares of revenues and growth" (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996, p. 1036). As the indifference in opinion between parties within the accounting firms continued to escalate, the commitment to different alternative templates began to be promoted and developed from each of the dissatisfied groups, leading in the direction of change within the industry (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Similarly, Cunningham (2002) argued that, "when organizational actors realize an alternative to the current template and have the power capacity for change, the organization will move from existing practices to more desired end states" (p. 281).

### **A New Organizational Template**

The organizational change process is considered complete when an organization begins to take on a new template and abandons a previous template or way of operating

(Legg et al., 2016). The implementation of a new organizational template signifies the acceptance of the changes within an organization and the move towards new practices and procedures developed through the change process. Although a new organizational template is initiated within an organization, it is important to continuously consider the reasons behind the successful approval of the new organizational structure in order to develop a larger understanding of the successes and challenges of implementing organizational change (Danylchuk et al., 2015).

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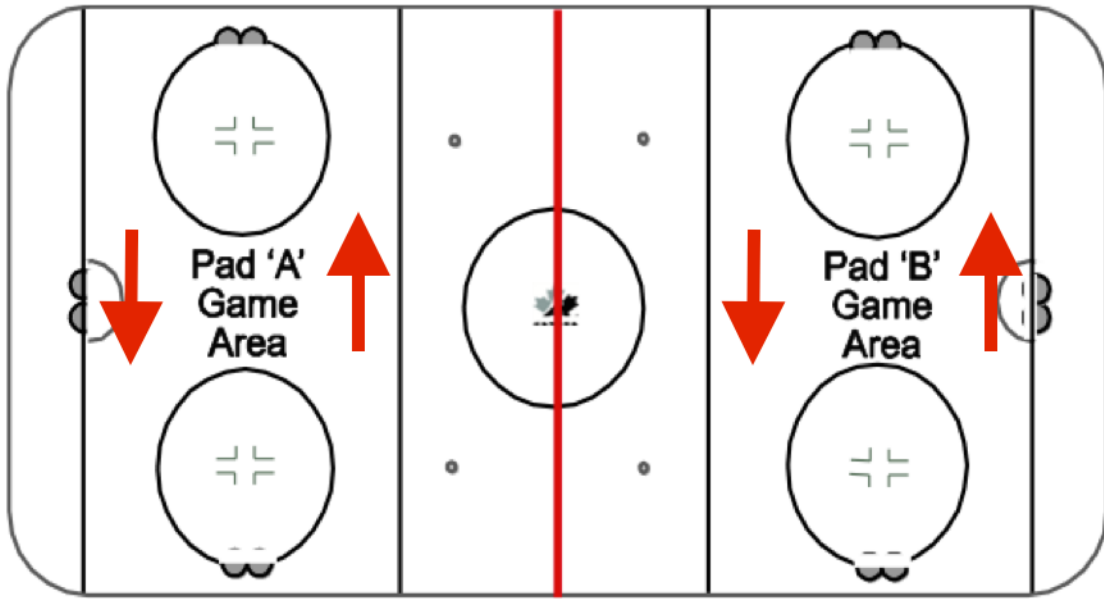
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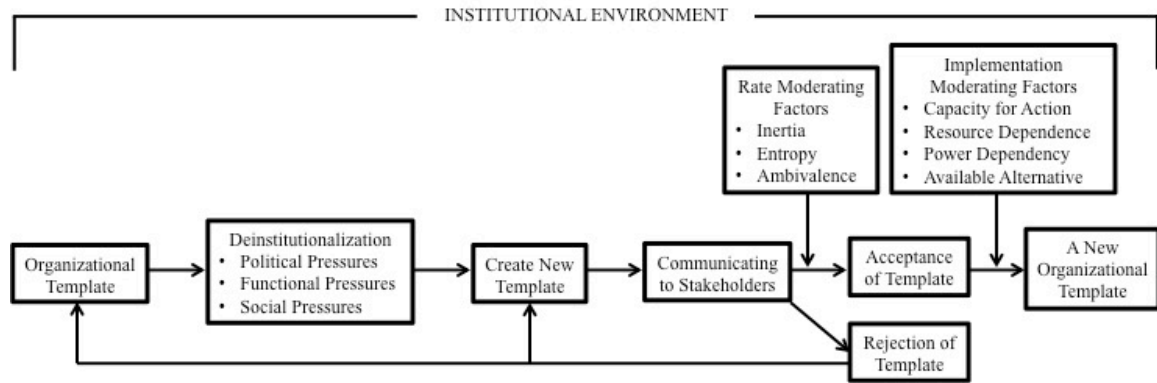
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## FIGURES



*Figure 1.* An example of two cross-ice hockey games identifying the direction of play across the ice from board to board (OMHA, 2016).



*Figure 2.* A modified representation of Cunningham's (2002) original integrative model of organizational change as developed by Legg, Snelgrove, and Wood (2016).

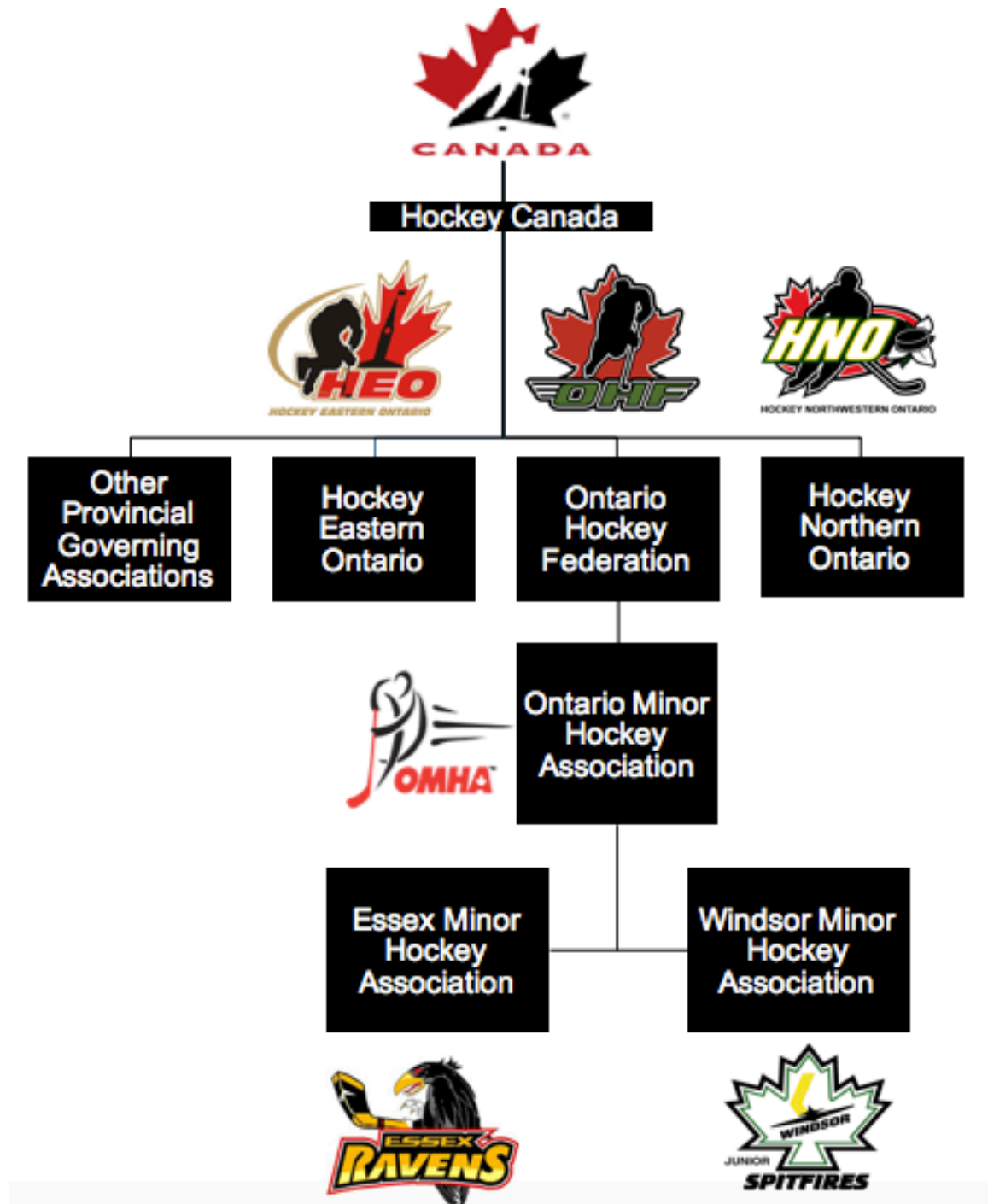


Figure 3. Structure of governing hockey organizations in Canada.

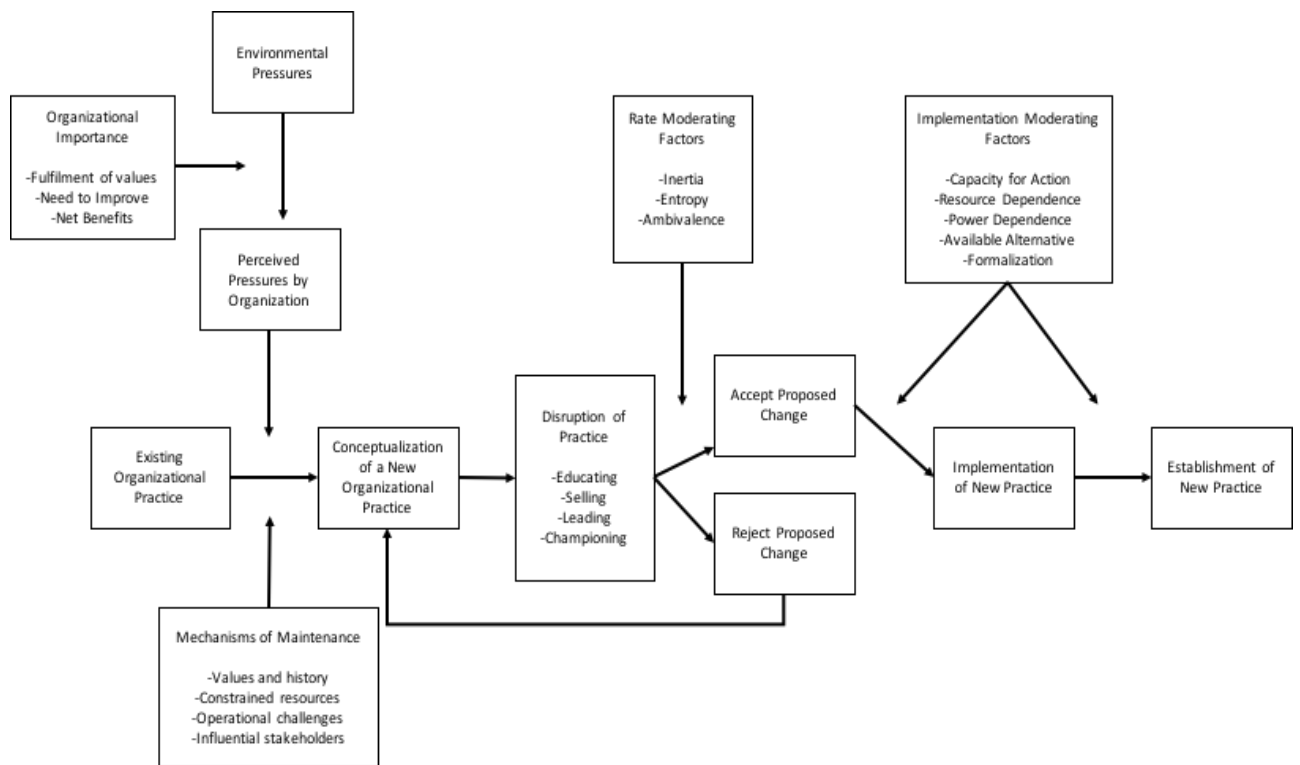


Figure 4. A staged model of organizational change in sport

APPENDICES  
**Appendix A**

**RECRUITMENT E-MAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS**

Hello Mr./Mrs. (insert participants name),

My name is Spencer Riehl and I am Master's student in the Faculty of Human Kinetics at the University of Windsor. I am currently conducting a research project on potential changes in minor hockey in Ontario. Specifically, I am interested in the concept of cross-ice hockey and the benefits, successes, challenges, and hesitations of employing these changes in minor hockey organizations.

I am contacting you to ask if you would be interested in participating in an interview regarding this topic. The interview will take roughly 45 minutes to complete, and your participation is completely voluntary. As well, your responses will remain confidential. As a person in your position, your understanding and opinions on this subject would be insightful and helpful in understanding the potential of change in minor hockey.

If you are willing to be interviewed or if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me (riehl1@uwindsor.ca) or my advisor Dr. Ryan Snelgrove (ryan.snelgrove@uwaterloo.ca) at any time.

Sincerely,

Spencer Riehl

Thank you for your interest in this study. This research has been cleared by the  
University of Windsor Research Ethics Board



## **Appendix B**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COACHES**

#### **Experience Coaching Hockey**

- Tell me about your past experiences with hockey (e.g., playing, coaching, etc.)
- Tell me about your past experiences as a coach.
  - Probe: How has your experience coaching differed/changed over the years?
- What has your experience been like coaching with (*specific organization, WMHA, EMHA, etc.*)?
  - Probe: What have been some of the positive experiences with the organization? Negative experiences?
  - Probe: What could be done differently? How could your experience be better?
- What pressures for change have you faced as a coach in hockey?
- What changes would you make to coaching and minor hockey to create a better experience for yourself? Fellow coaches? Players?
- From your perspective, what differences have you noticed in hockey participation?
  - Probe: Change in skill levels, diversity of participant, etc.
- How would you describe the experiences that your players have?

#### **Cross-Ice Hockey**

##### Essex

- Have you been involved with the concept of cross-ice hockey?
  - If so, what is your opinion on this idea?
- From a coach's perspective, what benefits do you see from such changes?
- From a coach's perspective, what challenges do you see from such changes?
- Does this idea have the potential to be a permanent modification?
  - Probe: what is your opinion of cross-ice play in preseason?
  - Probe: what would stop it from being used in the regular season?
- What have the responses been from parents regarding cross-ice play?
  - Probe: Have parents been supportive of the idea? Resistant?
- What have the responses been from the players regarding cross-ice play?
- As a coach, what barriers do you foresee implementing the cross-ice changes on a more permanent basis?
  - Probe: Pre-season?
  - Probe: Regular season?
- Is there support for these changes?
- As a coach how did you communicate these changes?
  - Probe: any challenges in doing so?
  - Probe: any successful techniques?
- Have these changes created a different experience for you as a coach?

- Probe: Would they create a different experience for you if implemented permanently or in the regular season?
- Has your hockey organization been supportive in implementing the changes?
  - Probe: Examples of what they have done or what you would like them to have done?

### Windsor

- Have you ever heard of the concept of cross-ice hockey?
  - If so, what is your opinion on this idea?
  - If not, explain concept to interviewee
- From a coach's perspective, what benefits do you see from such potential changes?
- From a coach's perspective, what challenges do you see from such potential changes?
- Does this idea have the potential to be a permanent modification?
  - Probe: what is your opinion of cross-ice play in preseason?
  - Probe: what would stop it from being used in the regular season?
- What have the responses been from parents regarding the potential of cross-ice play?
  - Probe: Have the parents been supportive of the idea? Resistant?
- What do you think the response from players would be regarding cross-ice play?
- As a coach, what barriers do you foresee implementing the cross-ice changes on a trial basis? On a permanent basis?
- Is there support for these changes?
  - Probe: What would the organization have to do to make it work?
- As a coach how could you communicate these changes?
  - Probe: any challenges in doing so?
  - Probe: any successful techniques?
- Would these changes create a different experience for you as a coach?

## Appendix C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BOARD MEMBERS

#### Experience in Hockey

- Tell me about your past experiences with hockey (e.g., playing, coaching, etc.)
- Tell me about your past experiences as board member with (*specific org.*)
  - Probe: How has your experience differed/changed over the years?
- Have you also been a coach with (*specific organization, WMHA, EMHA, etc.*)?
- What have been some positive experiences with the organization? Negative experiences?
  - Probe: What could be done different? How could your experience be better?
- From your perspective, what differences, if any, have you noticed in hockey participation over your years of involvement?
  - Probe: Change in skill levels, diversity of participant, etc.
- What pressures for change have you faced as a board member in minor hockey?
- What changes would you make to minor hockey to create a better experience?

#### Cross-Ice Hockey

##### Essex

- Have you been involved with the concept of cross-ice hockey?
  - If so, what is your opinion on this idea?
- From a board member's perspective, what benefits do you see from such changes?
- From a board member's perspective, what challenges do you see from such changes?
- Does this idea have the potential to be a permanent modification?
  - Probe: what is your opinion of cross-ice play in preseason?
  - Probe: what would stop it from being used in the regular season?
- What have the responses been from parents regarding cross-ice play?
  - Probe: Have parents been supportive of the idea? Resistant?
- What have the responses been from the players regarding cross-ice play?
- What have the responses been from the coaches regarding cross-ice play?
- As a board member, what barriers do you foresee implementing the cross-ice changes on a more permanent basis?
  - Probe: Pre-season?
  - Probe: Regular season?
- Is there support for these changes?
- As a coach how did you communicate these changes?
  - Probe: any challenges in doing so?
  - Probe: any successful techniques?
- Have these changes created a different experience for you as a board member?

- Probe: Would they create a different experience for you if implemented permanently or in the regular season?
- Has your hockey organization been supportive in implementing the changes?
  - Probe: Examples of what they have done or what you would like them to have done?
- What has your role been with respect to these changes?
- As an organization, how have these changes affected your goals and values?
  - Probe: What if they were implemented permanently?
  - Probe: What if they were implemented in the regular season?

### Windsor

- Have you ever heard of the concept of cross-ice hockey?
  - If so, what is your opinion on this idea?
  - If not, explain concept to interviewee
- From a board member's perspective, what benefits do you see from such potential changes?
- From a board member's perspective, what challenges do you see from such potential changes?
- Does this idea have the potential to be a permanent modification?
  - Probe: what is your opinion of cross-ice play in preseason?
  - Probe: what would stop it from being used in the regular season?
- What have the responses been from parents regarding the potential of cross-ice play?
  - Probe: Have the parents been supportive of the idea? Resistant?
- What do you think the response from players would be regarding cross-ice play?
- What do you think the response from coaches would be regarding cross-ice play?
- As a board member, what barriers do you foresee implementing the cross-ice changes on a trial basis? On a permanent basis?
- Is there support for these changes?
  - Probe: What would the organization have to do to make it work?
- As a board member how could you communicate these changes?
  - Probe: any challenges in doing so?
  - Probe: any successful techniques?
- Would these changes create a different experience for you as a coach?
- What would your role be with respect to these changes?
- As an organization, how might these changes affected your goals and values (if at all)?
  - Probe: What if they were implemented permanently?
  - Probe: What if they were implemented in the regular season?

## **Appendix D**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EXECUTIVE DECISION MAKERS**

#### **Role in Organization**

- Tell me about your past experiences with hockey (e.g., playing, coaching, etc.)
- What is your current role in the OMHA?
  - Probe: How has your experience differed/changed over the years (if at all)?
- What has your experience been like with working with the OMHA?
  - Probe: What have been some of your positive experiences with the organization? Negative experiences?
  - Probe: What could be done differently? How could your experience be better?
- From your perspective, what differences have you noticed in hockey participation (if any)?
  - Probe: Change in skill levels, diversity of participant, etc.
- What pressures for change have you faced as an executive with the OMHA?
- What changes would you make to minor hockey to create a better experience?

#### **Cross-Ice Hockey**

- What is your opinion of cross-ice play in minor hockey?
- Why was this policy created?
- How was this policy created?
- From your perspective, what benefits do you see from such changes?
- From your perspective, what challenge do you see in implementing such changes?
- Cross-ice play is only a suggested change for organizations in the OMHA, does this idea have the potential to be a permanent modification?
  - Probe: USA Hockey has implemented this change nationwide; could this be done in Canada/Ontario?
  - Probe: Do external organizations (e.g., USA Hockey) influence these changes?
- What factors are stopping this transition to permanent and/or widespread use?
- For organizations that wish to implement these changes what is the process?
  - Probe: How is it communicated?
- Is there anything that has helped these changes occur (education, communication, etc.)?
- Is there support for these changes?
  - Probe: What has been the reaction from parents? Participants? Coaches? Associations?
- As an organization, have these changes affected your goals and values?

## **Appendix E**

### **RESEARCHER'S BACKGROUND**

In order to remain transparent throughout the research process and in my role as a researcher, it is necessary for me to state my involvement and interests in hockey. Hockey has always been a passion of mine and, since the age of five, I have been an active participant in the sport. From playing competitively and now participating recreationally, hockey is a sport that has continued to be an important aspect in my life. I have also coached in minor hockey in Windsor, Ontario for over two years and continue to do so.

My experience has produced a curiosity for improving the well-being of others currently or not currently playing hockey. This concept has lead me to this study. Although the model of cross-ice hockey is new to me, there have been documented benefits to such modifications in sport. Furthermore, I would like to state that I view these changes as a beneficial modification to a sport that is historically resistant to change. From my perspective, the sport of hockey has been stagnant, and as someone who is highly involved, I strongly believe there is a need for changes such as the implementation of cross-ice play. Although my views are in favour of these changes, I clearly understand both the benefits and challenges faced by stakeholders and their respective organizations. This study does not look to push change on individuals and their organizations, but rather provide an analysis regarding the pressures, challenges, and barriers facing hesitant minor hockey organizations, while examining the successes and outcomes of those associations that have already implemented such changes.

I do not anticipate my involvement will impact the outcome of the study but instead, help provide a contextual understanding of the current landscape of minor hockey and some of the issues facing participants, stakeholders, and organizations.

## VITA AUCTORIS

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